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A MODERN CRITIC: STUART PRATT SHERMAN

by

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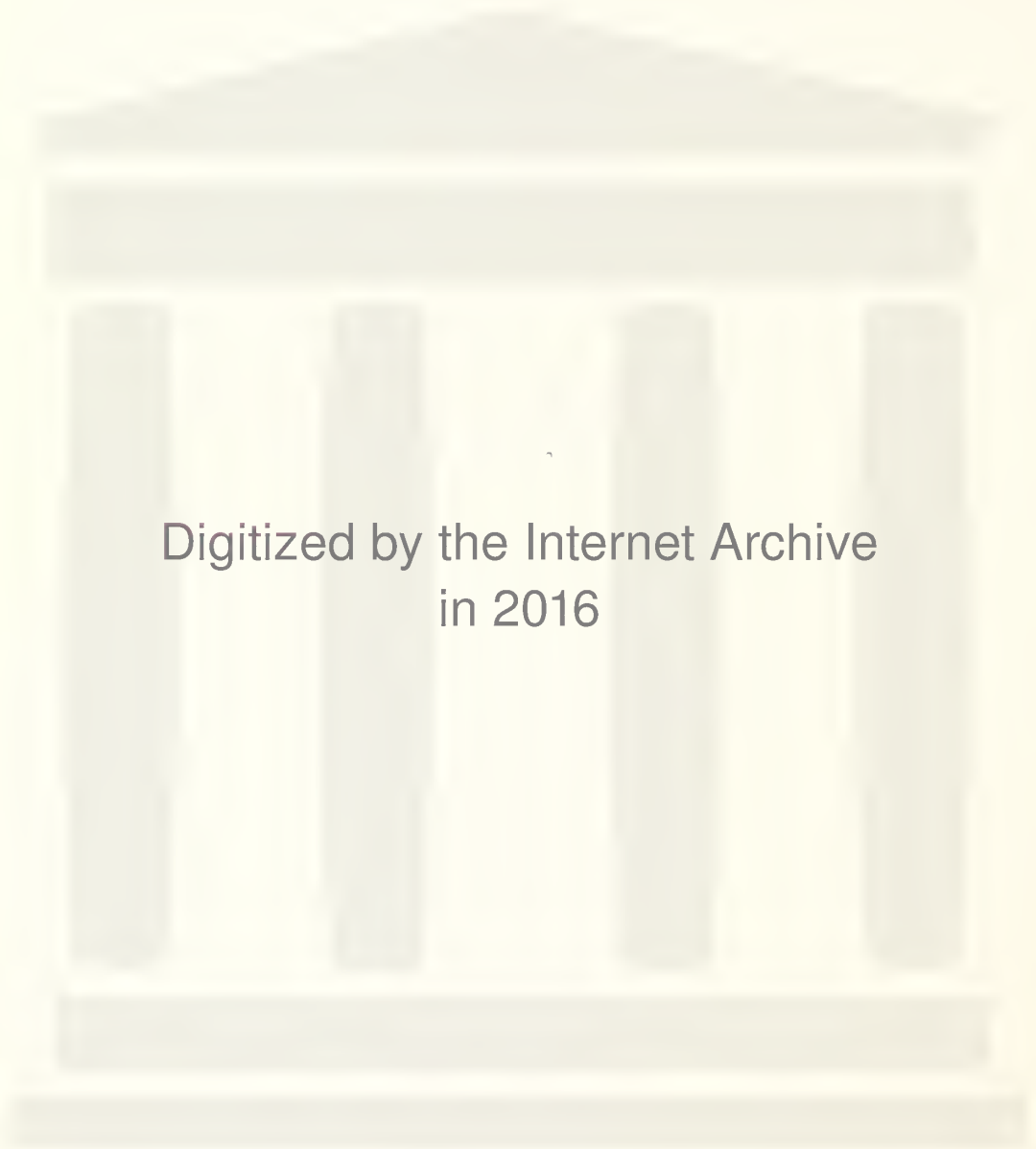
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I never was radical when young
For fear it would make me conservative
when old.

Robert Frost

PREFACE

Chapter headings are from the following poems of Walt Whitman: "Spirit That Form'd This Scene," "'There Was a Child Went Forth,'" "'Going Somewhere,'" "To a Certain Cantarice" (the first line: Here, take this gift), "Specimen Days," "For You O Democracy," "I Hear America Singing," "Darest Thou Now O Soul," and "Joy, Shipmate, Joy!"

For their understanding assistance, their critical judgment, their accuracy, their patience, and their ever-present good humor, I acknowledge a sincere and deep appreciation to: R. W. H., M. E. C., J. W. C., R. H. C., and L. A. G.; for their interested encouragement, I am indebted to Professors George M. Sneath and Thomas R. Mather.

Bertha W. Carter

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INTRODUCTION

"No man is ever single, simple and consistent" flashed Bernard DeVoto in an address made before the University of Missouri. That seems a simple enough statement, one that the majority of persons would be willing to agree on. Yet let any man in their acquaintance veer from the road he has always trod, and eyebrows rise up, whispers race merrily as migratory birds; for only a woman may safely change her mind and hope for an indulgent smile, a careless shrug of tolerant shoulders. When midway in his passage it appeared that Stuart Pratt Sherman was not the "single, simple and consistent" Humanist that he seemed to be; when it was observed that his heretofore "academic eye" was leaving the classical past to rest more and more on the contemporary American scene; when his ear was attuned more carefully to the song of Democracy, and "enthusiasm" was adopted into his creed; when his fight against Naturalism was waged with the motto "to understand, not to judge," amazement mounted among the general literary public,--to be followed by trepidation on the side of the Humanists, and a growing hope on the side of the Naturalists,--that perhaps here was the "white hope of the younger generation." But Sherman was once again to surprise, for although rejecting the Humanist program, he did not thereupon accept that of the Naturalist. Instead, he stepped briskly into the middle of the road and looking at the Humanist camp on the right and the Naturalist on the left, he calmly but with a quiet gusto singled out for approval those characteris-

tics from each camp which he approved; then in the same way those of which he disapproved; his approval was backed up by logical argument; his disapproval, by sound constructive criticism; Sherman, the Humanist, had felt the need of freedom from any one camp, and was an "explorer" in the world of literary ideas as Mark Twain, as Walt Whitman, as Waldo Emerson had been before him; as many have been in the past and as many will be hundreds and thousands of years in the future.

As informally as the subject allows, it is my intention to show the growth of Stuart Pratt Sherman as a critic of modern letters, tracing this growth with its inherited tendencies, its youthful direction, from his birth in 1881, through his high school and Williams days where his literary interest was kindled, to Harvard when Sherman's ideas underwent complete reorganization and he emerged a Humanist disciple of Professor Irving Babbitt and of Critic Paul Elmer More. To carry him into his teaching experience and the parallel one as critic which began with the stand against Naturalism that, contrary to opinion, was to continue even after his break with the Humanist movement. To point out and account for the divergencies from the Humanist code which culminated in 1923 with his rejection of the movement. To prove that this break or "shift," as it was popularly referred to, was a conscious one, consistent with his temperament which combined the adventurous curiosity and skepticism of a modern with a sympathetic interest and thorough knowledge of the past, giving him a deep understanding of

the Liberals on the one hand and of the Conservatives on the other. It was not, as has sometimes been thought, due to a slackening of his standards.

Through a swift and brief journey into his life,--by way of his letters, his journals, his own books, and many of the books written about him--it is to be hoped that a clearer, less distorted conception of Stuart Pratt Sherman, the critic, will emerge.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Humanist Leaders. Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More were the two leaders of the Twentieth Century Humanist Movement who advocated the revival of classicism through classical art which sought in human experience not the unique and eccentric, but the universal and central. Humanism was largely in defense of and opposed to the revolutionary Realistic-Naturalistic Movement which sought to prove man subordinate to nature and nothing more than the play thing of fate, a mere creature of chemistry with no control over his destiny. The revival in the Twentieth Century, led by Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More was announced by the former about 1895 in an address "The Rational Study of the Classics"; and from then on he set forth its principles, and elaborated its ideas as a teacher of literature and criticism at Harvard University and in a series of critical pieces,--notably Rousseau and Romanticism (1919) which pointed out the weakness in the romantic conception of life, and

Democracy and Leadership (1924), supporting the Federalistic tradition in America.

Paul Elmer More who was Babbitt's closest associate was both a journalist and a teacher; he had taught at Harvard and Bryn Mawr and had edited the Independent and the Nation. The greatest part of his criticism is to be found in the Shelburne series of essays which began in 1904.

These men, serious in intent were not unsuccessful as leaders. They wanted "the younger generation" to realize the essential "rightness" of their doctrine, but because of their aloofness and their "aristocratic" leanings, they failed to see their principles widely adopted.

Humanist Movement. The doctrine varies, but in the main it consists of a definite enough set of principles. Contrary to the scientific Naturalistic School which insists that life "may be accounted for in terms of the properties and laws of nature,"[1] the Humanists pre-assume a dualism in existence. The "natural" is sharply defined from the supernatural, or, at least, the human; moreover the Humanists believe there exists within man himself a dualism which is between the "lower" qualities (those which he possesses in common with the rest of nature) and the "higher" (those, notably a mind, which set him above nature). The chief human qualities, it follows, are reason, the moral will, and the "ethical" as opposed to the "natural"

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1 Walter Fuller Taylor, A History of American Letters (New York: American Book Company, 1936), p. 437.

or merely "recreative" imagination. These human qualities should bring about control from within or an "inner check" as it is popularly referred to, upon the emotions and passions. On the moral side, this check should impose a control on "indulgence," not only in physical excess, but also in uncritical emotions such as a vague humanitarianism. From the artistic consideration, "the inner check should preserve the writer from pointless vagaries of fancy, emotion, and form.... On the disorderly materials of life,"the Humanist seeks to impose a "discipline that shall check the otherwise unrestricted wanderings of temperament and hold them to a centrally ethical course, a golden mean characterized by balance, sanity, and poise."[1]

The past to the Humanist is all important in its relation to the present. The Oriental tradition is held valuable, especially in its influence on thought, by Irving Babbitt; the Christian tradition is favored by Paul E. More, and in recent years by T. S. Eliot, as being necessary to the Humanist doctrine. The Renaissance is represented by Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe. That which all of the Humanist members agree upon is the inclusion of the Greek tradition, as revealed in both the dramatists and in the philosophers, particularly Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. By taking "the best that has been thought and said in the past," a measure for the present is to be found, a measure that accurately and reliably discerns and

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1 Ibid., p. 438.

tests those values of central, lasting, and representative worth.

In this set of philosophical pre-assumptions, there is no room for the Romanticist or the Realist. These writers have veered too greatly from the central position. They have travelled too far from Aristotle's "golden mean." Finally,--accuse the Humanists,--the Romanticist and the Realist are concerned fundamentally with man in nature. The Humanist, on the other hand, is concerned fundamentally with "man above" nature. In a word the Humanist ideal centers on man as an essentially normal, ethical, and central human being who, in turn, produces a literature with traits typical and representative of such a human being.

Naturalist Leader. Henry Louis Mencken, popularly referred to as "Mencken," was the best known leader of the opposing movement, that of the Naturalists whose point of view had developed with the growing dominance of science and the machine. Mencken, as primarily a journalistic and critical force rather than a creator, advanced his "prejudices," and ideas through the medium of the Baltimore Sun, the Smart Set, and The American Mercury. His most representative thoughts are contained in the Prejudices published at intervals from 1919-'27.

In opposition to the return to the past which the Humanists advocated, he was in favor of picturing in accurate, penetrating style the trend of the present, and accepted as his

"philosophy," the self-interest of man, and the dominance over him of science, the machine, and "nature." Man, average man, he laughed at as being incurably stupid, and therefore he had no patience with democracy. The average middle class was merely a "booboisie" and the "academic" liberals were fools for thinking they could civilize man who is only a fool. All that Mencken felt was possible was to have a good laugh since there was nothing else to do. When asked about his attitude toward American civilization, he phrased his attitude in a single question and answer; to the question: Why he continued to live in the country he attacked so vigorously, he answered: "Why do men go to zoos?"[1]

Cocky, racy in speech, contemptuous of conventional morality, reticence, and what he termed "Puritanism," Mencken embodied the mood of the dissillusioned post-war generation who consequently hailed him as their messiah.

Naturalist Movement. (also known as Realist and Liberal Movement). An intelligent, reliable analysis of it is found in Harry Hartwick's Foreground of American Fiction. In a fresh, pungent, prose style Mr. Hartwick in a section, Umbilical to Earth, writes of this movement as follows:

> Naturalism (the philosophy of laissez faire) "implies that Nature considers man just another of her creatures and ignores his claim to be akin to the

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1 Ibid., p. 383.

> angels. Our strongest animal impulses are most fundamental to life's continuance and are therefore most to be trusted." The naturalist lets Nature take its course, accepts the universe of science, and cares only for things "as they are," rather than for things "as they have been," or "should be." "Whatis," he agrees with Pope, "is right." Nature is a vast contrivance of wheels within wheels; man is a "piece of fate" caught in the machinery of Nature; and love is ultimately a product of the same forces that control gravitation. The world is a jungle, where men grapple with one another for life and its accessories, murder (and are in turn murdered), fly after pleasure and resign themselves with stoic calm to whatever pain they cannot elude. Man's only duty is to discharge his energies and die, at the same time expressing his individuality as best he can.

Since this radical Twentieth Century development unlike that of the Humanists', was a wholly new one, since its effect was so powerfully to affect American literature, it is not enough to give one man's treatment of it. Mr. Hartwick describes the movement as somewhat of a bad joke; Dr. Taylor, a more conservative writer, comments more seriously, and, in addition, presents some of its causes and effects.

Dr. Taylor observes that there have been other eras in which culture has been scattered and diffused, but that surely the present one is the most complex of them all, and the factors controlling its culture the least integrated. This conclusion follows from the multiplicity of the Twentieth Century with its burst of industrialization, and its steady stream of inventions; "The machine process was the dominant force in the economic

life of America."[1]

Parallel with the machine dominance was the influence of scientific thought. It colored the entire national life; students, universities, corporations, financed and sponsored research. From a relatively unimportant position, it grew to giant proportions with an equal growth of prestige. So great was this prestige that other fields felt its power and the objective method it employed was inculcated into their programs. As it permeated the country, more and more emphasis was placed "on fact, on exact thinking, on the discovery of new truth."[2]

As a result of this temper, continues Dr. Taylor, much of our modern tragedy has been based not on the Aristotelean conception of man, noble man, overthrown by fate, but with man, any man, helpless in the hands of the indifferent or hostile cosmos, controlled whether he wishes it or not.

Summing up the post-war mood Dr. Taylor says it was characterized by "uncertainty produced by a highly fluid...culture."[3] Old fashioned virtues were approached with cynicism, and there appeared "a pervasive hedonism" (the belief that life's object is sensuous enjoyment) visible in the new interest and revival of the "pleasures of the body" and of the "fascination of sex."[4] To state the qualities of this mood is not to

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1 Ibid., p. 328.

2 Ibid., p. 330.

3 Ibid., p. 335.

4 Ibid., p. 336.

close the matter; for the mood was too complex for any such easy dismissal. Many mores from the American past were involved; modern science, and industrialism played their parts, as did European thought and literature. And at the center, carrying everything with it, was a whirlpool of craving for speed, novelty, excitement, sensationalism, "for the strong emotional stimulus of jazz; for a life of hurried impressions rather than of thought."[1]

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1 Loc. cit.

CHAPTER I

SPIRIT THAT FORM'D THIS SCENE

In 1814, in the little New England town of Sheldon, Vermont, the man who was destined to become Stuart Pratt Sherman's grandfather, Ezra Wright Sherman, was born. Here he graduated from Middlebury College in 1840 with Phi Beta Kappa rank; here he taught Latin for a few years, was attracted by law, studied that, was admitted to the bar, practiced for a while; and then, because of ill health, abandoned the profession for farming; continuing to practice, to some degree, on the side. It is not entirely facetious to believe that from him Stuart Pratt Sherman inherited, among other characteristics, a sure wit and a sharp effective humor. The family preserved by journal, by letter, and by word of mouth, many of the pertinent statements of this shrewd eighteenth century Vermonter. One of them, carefully treasured in the family annals, was made during his last illness. Looking brightly at his wife who was some years his junior, he remarked crisply: "You'll make a very successful widow."[1] A previous brief and to-the-point comment was uttered on another occasion of illness. He was being fed some broth which accidentally spilled on his verdant beard. Weakly, but with his ever flashing humor, he asked: "Is my mouth such a recondite affair

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1 Jacob Zeitlin and Homer Woodgridge, Life and Letters of Stuart Pratt Sherman (Murray Hill: Farrar & Rinehart Incorporated, 1929), I, p. 4.

that you can't find it?"[1]

Ezra's wife, formerly one Harriet Ann Chase, schoolmistress from neighboring New Hampshire, served as a lively foil to her husband; when young she had a persistent habit of scribbling verse which she burned after her marriage. "Like her husband, she had a turn for pointed and humorous phrase,"[2] and again a part of the literary bent found in her grandchild was undoubtedly traceable to her.

Stuart's maternal grandfather, Parsons Stewart Pratt, was a gentleman well supplied with a kindly humor, and in addition, a love for books. He had come to Dorset, Vermont as a young Congregationalist minister, and he remained in the Dorset church for forty-one years. Books he always loved as his well stocked library vouched, but people were even dearer to him; as one woman said: "Into our homes he came, really concerning himself about our affairs."[3] Is it far fetched to imagine Stuart's later interest in persons,--in the democracy formed by those persons,--stemmed from Parsons Stewart Pratt, New England clergyman?

Parsons Pratt's wife, Martha Ann Pollard, was a spirited and somewhat mischievous woman who never thought she'd marry a minister. She was too frivolous. But she did, and never re-

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 5.

gretted it. She, too, possessed an inventive way with words as witnessed in an original song she used to hum:

"O, I can't be a nun,
O, I won't be a nun,
For I'm so fond of pleasure,
That I cannot be a nun."1

Fortunate was the grandchild who inherited her ready twist with words, her congenial, merry wit.

Stuart's father, John, was one of the nine children of Ezra and Harriet. John seemed, or seems from this vantage point into the past, to have been the unlucky member of his family,--probably because of his tendency from babyhood to tuberculosis. At any rate, with a touch of genius, with a love of reading and of poetry, he became, through some twist of irony, a druggist. In connection with establishing a store, he travelled to California in 1875, was attracted to the country immediately; yet on returning to Dorset to get his bride, Parsons Pratt's daughter, Ada, he went not, strangely enough, to California, but to Anita , Iowa, where in 1879 he set up his store, and where Persis and Stuart, the two elder children were born. Mr. Sherman's ill health, coupled with a restless disposition and a great love of wandering, caused him in 1882 to take up stakes again, and this time, after searching through Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa, he finally bought some 160 acres in Rolfe, Iowa where, Mrs. Sherman recorded, "the blizzards raged in winter and the

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1 Loc. cit.

cyclones scorched in summer."[1]

In spite of their father's seemingly unavoidable misfortunes, the family were exceedingly fond of him. He must have been somewhat after the Bronson Alcott tradition, a dreamer, and an idealist fighting against odds stronger than himself; in addition he was handicapped by ill health.

Ellen Burns Sherman, Stuart's paternal aunt, was the first member of the family to engage actively in the literary profession. She wrote, mainly, essays in a Stevensonian manner, and it is probable that her elaborate style which Stuart admired did influence his early writing.

"Both his grandfathers were scholars, in different fashions; his father, though not a scholar, was a great reader; and in the two preceding generations of his father's family,"[2] a marked tendency toward literary expression had made itself felt. A star was already poised in the heavens of Anita, Iowa, in the fall of the year 1881,--a date announcing the waning of that period which is popularly referred to as The Gilded Age; into the midst of the panic of the fast-closing frontier, into a world topsy-turvy with the spread of the Darwinian philosophy, just beginning to be bewildered by the seed of the Freudian doctrine, into a world when the "rise of the city" was pushed forward by the gigantic invasions of industrialism, when population was increasing, natural resources decreasing, when America

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1 Ibid., p. 7.

2 Loc. cit.

was being submerged and bound by Nature on the one hand and the giant paws of "big business" on the other; when the tools man had cunningly contrived to dominate the wilderness had grown strong, had reached forth suddenly, and had, in turn, subdued him; into a world confused in spirit, seething with injustice, sensing its dilemna, yet unable to find its bearing, Stuart Pratt Sherman was born on October first. Into a world whose literature was still a "baby literature," whose main source of reading matter was obtained only from the "polite fiction" of Dickens, Barrie, Reade, Collins, Eliot, Kipling, and Stevenson; into a world whose literature was sufficient unto itself, but was hardly to be termed harmful to the "status quo" which the moneyed interests hoped to continue. Into an America, into a West, especially, that was simmering and boiling with suppressed speech; into one of the tensest eras in American life, Stuart Pratt Sherman, opened his mouth, struggled for his first breath, and uttered his first cry of amazement.

CHAPTER II

THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

Amazement was to persist and struggle as well; but the spirit that was to become a prominent one in the shaping of Twentieth Century America was to prove itself equal to the task.

Sherman's first recollections had mostly to do with his sister Persis with whom he always played, and with whom he was closest throughout his childhood. They invented and put through all the games their busy minds could contrive; and they had ample space to put their inventions into effect. In their mother's words: "Probably Iowa is the most interesting country in the world for healthy little children to live in--with horses to ride, chickens to feed, and a dog for friend and pal. From morning till night there was never a question, 'What shall we do?'"[1]

When the children were about four or five they learned their letters from their father, and the following winter they started in at the small country schoolhouse which although it was a half a mile away could be seen plainly from their farm. Stuart's acquaintance with books dated from this age; on many of the long winter days as his mother wrote in her journal, "there are many hours when a man may read without feeling that anything is neglected. John used to sit and read Homer's Iliad

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1 Ibid., p. 8.

by the hour, often stopping to read aloud a passage that was too fine to enjoy alone." She observed, too, that her husband "loved Seneca's philosophy and Milton's poetry and Shakespeare's plays." Then she concluded that entry with the words: "As the children got a little older I used to read aloud to the family a great deal, and Stuart was always one of the listeners."[1]

Katherine, a younger sister of Sherman's, also wrote of the love of books that was early prevalent in their household. Her father, she said, " would read out loud some of the fine passages in the Iliad, making gestures which Stuart imitated.... As mother said, he 'enjoyed reading Shakespeare just as much as if he didn't know him mostly by heart.' He liked Bret Harte and he bought a set of Bulwer-Lytton." About Bulwer-Lytton he wrote, as Sherman might have written later, "'I like some of his books but I am too much of a democrat to like him altogether. The mere accident of birth and position is worth more to him than a lifetime of devotion.'"[2]

For five years from 1882 to the winter of 1887, the family prospered, John Sherman was successful in his druggist business, his health appeared to be better, the children and Mrs. Sherman were well and happy, and life, however unsettled externally, had been treating them with unexpected kindness. In 1887 the dread tuberculosis reoccurred, and it was clearly apparent that John

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1 Ibid., p. 9.

2 Ibid., p. 10.

Sherman could live no longer in the climate of Iowa. So in 1887, when Stuart was five and a half, the family moved again, this time to California where they settled in Los Angeles,--a city immensely different from the western prairie farm they had known. Here, Mrs. Sherman noted, they found a rapidly growing city with a "public library, churches, ... schools, flowers and fruits and neighbors, balmy skies, never a blizzard or cyclone."[1]

Of the house itself Stuart, in an autobiography he wrote when he was about thirteen, observed with romantic enthusiasm that it was "a little low house probably built by the Spaniards. In the back room we found an old rusty dagger. This filled the house with romance for us children." Then with the humor that was beginning to assert itself, he added: "In front of the house was a little orange orchard and in back two big fig trees. There were besides a few grape vines from which my sister and I carefully picked all the grapes just before they were ripe."[2]

Stuart's childhood was no different from many another child's. He was full of high spirits, a healthy normal boy, with a rather even disposition, inclined to be not quite as forward, not quite as adventurous as his sister Persis, who took the lead in all their doings, but with the average boy's ability for getting into mischief and getting out again. In his autobiography Stuart described an occasion of this kind which took place in his father's California drugstore. The Spanish clerk had become fond

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Ibid., p. 16.

of six-year-old Stuart and used to let him look at the colored penny postals. "He had a habit when he showed me how to do anything," recalled Stuart, "of saying 'See' 'See.' I used to steal a terrible amount of chewing gum from the case until my father caught me at it." Then he added, "I didn't take so much afterwards. At first I would only chew it as long as the flavor lasted when I would throw it into the street."[1]

After he had started school in California, in 1887 or '88, he formed a firm friendship with a boy, Riv Nimock, who was two years older than he was, but who, it seemed, shared Stuart's enthusiasm for the cowboy and Indian life. For six years Riv and Stuart were the fastest friends, and of this playmate and himself Stuart said: "We used to go down town and gaze in at the shop windows at the guns and saddles and imagine that the happiest life in the world would be to live like an Indian or a cowboy riding a Mexican mustang with a rifle across our knees."[2]

Dime novels also entered into his life in his California school days, and about these he later, in Dean Brigg's composition course at Harvard, wrote an essay. It began with these words: "'Parents are wise in tabooing the dime novel; thereby they add to its perusal a relish which they themselves in Browning Clubs have sought and sought in vain.'"[3]

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1 Ibid., p. 17.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 18.

Stuart so far was a boy closely resembling his contemporaries in many respects; showing only as a forshadowing of his later life a keenly observant attitude, a love of reading, both outgrowths of a sensitive, introspective, and resolutely honest nature. All of them qualities which in themselves were not unusual; yet all qualities which were to continue in his later critical writings.

Throughout the years in California, Stuart's father was not growing stronger; yet he seemed to have been in so far as he was able, an ideal father, naturally gay spirited, and never too busy to give time to the children. The strain of his illness proved too much, however, and in 1892, when Stuart was eleven years old, he died.

With his father's death, Stuart changed perceptively as his mother observed, "'from a rather timid child to an eager responsive boy who began to feel that he was the man of the house and must look out for the family.'"[1] The problem of supporting the family was indeed a pressing one, and one that seemed difficult to solve. Both Stuart and his sister did odd jobs, and Mrs. Sherman herself even tried selling books from door to door. Then into the neighborhood moved a family by the name of Hubbs. Mr. Hubbs was a gold miner who was planning soon to start on another expedition. The Shermans and the Hubbses became fond of each other almost on first acquaintance, and

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1 Ibid., p. 21.

though the Hubbses had only come to the neighborhood of the Shermans in the early autumn of 1893 the two families had Thanksgiving dinner together, and later shared Christmas festivities. The Hubbses became especially attached to Stuart and begged to take him with them on their coming trip. Mrs. Sherman was hesitant,--she had never felt so greatly in need of Stuart,--yet she realized the bitter disappointment involved if she refused; and the trip offered advantages in the outdoor life, which would be a good thing, and in the experience itself. Therefore with characteristic wisdom Mrs. Sherman consented to Stuart's participation in the trip; and in January, 1894 at thirteen years of age Stuart set out with the Hubbses for Black Canon, Arizona. Part of the way they went by train and the remainder of the travel was by wagon and on foot. Stuart was not old enough to realize that he was participating in the last burst of expansion of the fast disappearing frontier, and that when he left California he was leaving it for good. Yet the California environment of his early years was never wholly to be lost from his life, or his imagination. He was too impressionable and sensitive for a country as distinctive and beautiful as California not to have left its mark, and "the light and color of California play through most of Stuart Sherman's writing. A delight in pure color, in sharp contrast, a certain almost tropical excess of expressiveness, a passion for imagery--these traits appear in his style whenever he gives his temperament free rein."[1] When

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1 Loc. cit.

he, in his middle period was deliberately restraining and holding back his imaginative side, these traits seemed almost entirely to have disappeared; they were, as it became evident later, more conspicuous in the earlier and in the final periods of his life.

In the mining camp in Arizona Stuart was to mature not only physically but mentally as well, and his experiences here were to color definitely the rest of his life. He recounted some of his initial experiences in a letter to his mother in the course of which he informed her he had fallen over a cactus bush in the dark and had, as he put it, "stolen" some of its needles which he had proceded to dig out with his knife when he got back to camp. "It made me a little lame," he added, "and Pete (the camp cook) wanted me to put some Mexican Lightning on it but I did not. It was all right in a couple of days." His sense of humor emerged in a postscript in which he observed that "(Pete's biscuits are usually green with envy or soda I don't know which.)"[1]

His reading of which he was steadily becoming fonder, did not stop with the advent of the mining trip. Mrs. Hubbs provided him with much good reading. As far as possible she apparently allowed him his pick of literature from that obtainable at the camp, being wise enough to let him satisfy his natural, boyish craving for adventure, in the popular reading of the day. This reading he listed in another letter to his mother. He told her: "Since I started I have read Old Mortality by Sir Walter Scott,

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1 Ibid., p. 26.

Willy Reilly by William Carleton and the Millionare's Folly by M. L. Jensky."[1]

If Stuart was zealous in his reading, he was equally so in his determination to do as much and as hard work as the men in the camp. Mrs. Hubbs used to despair of making him rest, and she confided to Mrs. Sherman in a letter that when Mr. Hubbs saw Stuart at heavy work he always suggested that Stuart rest awhile. "Instead," she continued, "Stuart gets the ax and chops wood and attacks the biggest logs."[2]

Stuart must very often have been lame and tired, but then as when he grew older he never went into anything halfway; it was all or nothing. He was determined to sleep as the men in the camp slept, eat what they ate, and do fully as hard a day's work as they did. He became quite attached to Pete, the cook, with whom he shared a cabin, and he listened to what poor Mrs. Hubbs worriedly termed "'incredibly filthy and profane language.'"[3] No doubt this language interested him as he had nowhere encountered its like before, but it did not harm him, for "the boy who bunked in the cook house with Pete and panned dirt in friendly rivalry with Mike gained thereby a sympathy with the average working man and a basis for enduring faith in him"[4] that was to

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1 Ibid., p. 28.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 29.

4 Loc. cit.

assert itself in much of his later writings. Though he was to spend approximately the next ten years of his life in New England and have many of his ideas formed under its guidance, he never lost his appreciation of his Arizona friends. In the spring of 1894 while Sherman was still at the Arizona camp, Mrs. Sherman had definitely made up her mind to leave California and to journey back to New England. Stuart, when informed of this decision, was extremely hostile to the idea, and said that even if she felt that she must return, he just couldn't; that he was able to take care of himself, (he was thirteen) and that he could now shoot a gun; the letter in which he accurately recorded all the reasons for his remaining was amusing and a precursor of the older Stuart who was to develop. He handled his ideas skilfully and with force: "I am learning a great many things here and getting strong and I am always well. I am doing almost a man's work eating two men's meals and feel as if I had the muscle of 4 men." So strong was his aversion to returning East at this time that he even suggested: "At Barstow if the iron mines sell as they very likely will I can get a job of good pay and," he continued, in all seriousness, "if I allow you to perhaps you can run a boarding house."[1] Stuart was growing up!

Mrs. Sherman must have smiled upon receiving that letter from her thirteen-year-old son, but tolerant mother that she was, she wisely decided to let Stuart remain at the Arizona camp at

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1 Ibid., p. 30 f.

least until this particular expedition was finished which she knew was to be sometime in the late summer. Mr. Hubbs felt the occasion important enough to have added his assurance of his hope of Stuart's remaining, and as if to let Mrs. Sherman know that all was going well in the matter of Stuart's education, he observed: "I think Stuart is improving in many ways--intellectually and otherwise. We have a schoolteacher examination book, covering almost everything desirable in the way of book knowledge in brief, and he does not ignore it." Mr. Hubbs was never easy in a discussion along educational lines and it is obvious in his closing words "I must be off for the horses"[1] that he shelved the subject with relief.

Mrs. Hubbs in an account of the trip which she wrote later, spoke of Sherman's hunger for reading matter, and it was she who provided him with his first lesson in intelligent criticism. "One day," she began, "Stuart found a torn copy of one of Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth's novels. He read it with avidity, and pronounced it without exception the best book he had ever read." Mrs. Hubbs continued by saying she remembered that she too at that age had delighted in "surreptitious reading of The Fireside Companion,"[2] and that Stuart's enthusiastic statement amused her greatly. Wisely, however, instead of flatly contradicting his opinion she told him she agreed with him that the author was a

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1 Ibid., p. 32.

2 Ibid., p. 34.

popular writer, but that she wasn't an artist, and that she, Mrs. Hubbs, wouldn't enjoy the book. Stuart, of course, asked the question Mrs. Hubbs had been playing for: "Why?" Her answer in her own words was as follows: "I remember I took up the book and read aloud a page, rather cruelly overemphasizing the blunders in English, also the vain repetitions. When I stopped he said, 'Yes, I see now what you mean. She says the same thing over and over again,' and then added with more than a hint of his later caustic style, 'And it was hardly worth telling the first time.' Later, in recalling this incident, I have often felt that I was present at the birth of a critic."[1]

Mrs. Hubbs didn't stop at this object lesson; in subtle but numerous ways she strove to feed Stuart's literary appetite with nourishing food. Often when he was doing some odd job about the house, she'd talk to him about her childhood and tell him stories she had read and loved. In speaking of these occasions later, she commented: "I began the story of David Copperfield. His insistence on every detail made the telling of it rival Shaw's Back to Methuselah in length. Then followed Pendennis, Henry Esmond, Oliver Twist, and finally Les Miserables."[2] At the impressionable age of thirteen when all events seem to cut more deeply into one's memory, Stuart was reading literature, but romantic literature. As it has been pointed out, Stuart was born

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1 Ibid., p. 35.

2 Loc. cit.

when the literature of America was struggling against great odds, the odds of the monopoly that European literature had gained and was being helped to gain by "The Gilded Age" spectators. Even the small amount of American literature being published when he was a child was highly romantic and sentimental in character, because the "genteel tradition" still persisted and because there was no market for anything approaching realism or proletarianism. Stuart was highly imaginative and the literature that he came in contact with was to define his taste for some time to come. He cried over Dickens and grew bold with Henry Esmond: he was in truth a romantic of the English school, untouched as yet by the classics except those which as a small child he had heard his father mention and read aloud, and untouched as yet by anything approaching realism. That the effect of this reading was to be lasting, however, was proved when twenty-five years later on again meeting Mrs. Hubbs, Stuart told her that the characters in those stories she had read to him were clearer than any others he had ever read, and that when he had taken a college examination years later he had not had to read Les Miserables so vivid were the events and the characters in his memory.

Stuart's Arizona mining experience came to an end in August, 1894, after lasting almost eight months. When his mother afterwards wrote of the incident she said that it had made a man of him. She did not mean that "he now passed prematurely out of boyhood; his letters to her are sufficient proof of the contrary. But he gained an independence, a self-confidence, and a resource-

fulness which many a boy does not attain in ten years at home."[1] He also developed a physical strength and vigor far in advance of his age, and which he always treated as though it were inexhaustible as later years will show. All the men that he associated with at the camp were his teachers of one thing or another, and Mrs. Hubbs' stories about books were a valuable course in literature, as valuable as any he would have received in school. As his biographers observed: "'Mr. Pete' and Mike and the other miners unconsciously gave him an understanding of working men and an interest in them which persisted throughout his life and helped to determine the course of his thinking,"[2] probably impelling him to state firmly his belief in the average man's search for the "good life."

On August 28, 1894 young Stuart stepped off the train and into New England, where he was to remain for almost ten years. A paragraph he later wrote about Mark Twain might easily have been applied to him; for it paralleled almost exactly his own case. He said: "he had the good fortune to be born in the West; so that, of course, he had to go East--otherwise he might, instead of becoming an American, have remained a mere Bostonian or New Yorker all his life, and never learned to love Chicago and San Francisco at all."[3]

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1 Ibid., p. 38.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Stuart Pratt Sherman, On Contemporary Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917), p. 35.

Stuart, after his first rebellion against the East, soon grew to love the Dorset Vermont countryside where his grandfather's farmhouse was located; the contrast from Arizona plains and sagebrush to New England forest and mountains, the complete change in the way of companions--from hearty western miners to sedate New England cousins, aunts, and uncles; the"education" of hunting and riding contrasted with the comparatively tame life he led in the village town and schoolroom, were difficult adjustments, especially for one so young; and there were, no doubt, moments of rebellion and unhappiness when Stuart, like Huck Finn, would have liked to run away from this strange New England civilization. Still there were compensations; the Vermont boys at the village school had been brought up "on the Bible" so to speak, but they were open to ideas, and Stuart willingly supplied them; a boy from the West with its legends of cowboys and Indians didn't drop suddenly into every New England town and the boys realized and made the most of their good fortune; Stuart was their leader, and a well loved one; he was not conceited and he never consciously pushed himself into a place of leadership; probably that, in part, accounted for his popularity. After a year's attendance at the small school in Dorset, it was thought to be advantageous to send Stuart to Troy Conference Academy at Poultney which is about twenty miles northward from Dorset. Stuart's cousins attended there,too. At this time, 1895, Stuart had no intention of going to college, probably because his western experiences had made college look like child's play, and not

very exciting child's play at that. As a result his courses at Poultney were all more or less scientific subjects, the only foreign language he studied being German, and that for only two terms of his second year. Along with this he had one course in the English classics, those two courses being the only liberal arts courses in which he enrolled. He was fourteen at the time of his entrance to Poultney, independent in thought and speech and nicknamed by the boys "Arizona Pete." He is remembered at Poultney as "independent in views, ready with scornful boyish intolerance even of his friends, equally ready in regretful compunction for any injustice, fun-loving, with a taste for practical jokes, but more responsive to a challenging idea than to anything else, honest and decent-minded always."[1] Almost all of the above description could be applied to the critic of subsequent years, especially the reference to his responsiveness to a challenging idea.

While at Poultney he joined in almost all of the activities, and one especially engaged a great deal of his attention. That was an organization known as the Trojan Literary Society. Into this Stuart threw himself with his well known zeal, entering into its weekly debates with enthusiasm, sprinkling its paper with lively farcical bits of doggerel, and, once, including among the usual essays, verse, and school news, a negro charm for curing corns. It began:

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1 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., pp. 43 f.

"Go pare yo' cawn in de dew of de mawn
With a blade dat's shaved de daid!"[1]

Probably Pete had chanted it back in the Arizona camp; at any rate, it delighted its readers no end. Incidentally it pointed to the Sherman who employed sharp contrasts to put over a point in critical writing.

Stuart was not only a part of the literary life of the school, but he was also an important member of the football team; and although most of the members of that particular team were older and heavier fellows than Sherman, he'd rush like a ram into their midst and down they'd all tumble in a cluttered heap. Stuart was as eager and determined in football as he'd been at his work in the mining camp.

The religion of the school, strictly orthodox Methodism, didn't always appeal to boys as lively as Stuart and his contemporaries; and Stuart with the zest that he was to show in his later wrestling with the Humanist group reacted vigorously against it. Perhaps that "prescribed" religion was one of the starters toward thinking for himself. Be that as it may, Stuart and his pals held many bull sessions discussing earnestly religion and moral questions from the nonconformist, rebel point of view. The rebellion against some of the school's rules even took the form of a secret organization which in every subtle and sometimes not so subtle way sought to elude these rules.

Stuart's grandfather of whom he was unusually fond, and who

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1 Ibid., p. 44.

it is quite certain returned the affection, entered in his journal, at about this time, Stuart "seems to have the pen of a ready writer;"[1] his facility, though undisciplined, showed a pleasant easy style, somewhat given to exclamation points, but interesting and lively all the same. In a letter sent to his younger brother John, this can be seen; he began in a bantering tone: "You little Rat, you write a corking good letter, did you know it? Well, it's an undisputed fact. You don't want to put on any airs about it though for it runs in the family.--You get it from your mother."[2] In another letter to his sister Persis who was teaching in a nearby country school, a barely perceptible hint of his awakening interest in literature was observed, when among other things he told her that someday, although maybe not right away, "the Shermans are all going to take a vacation, and know what it means to have the right to do nothing, but the younkers have got to work first." He continued that Boston was the place they'd have this spree "because down in Boston, you know, they like the things they ought to like and don't run mad over some modern monstrosity which they live to condemn in cooler hours. (This is what I hear.)" In the next sentence or so his interest in the "literary life" was again evident: "We would go to operas and hear fine lectures, and 'hang out' for hours and hours in the library, and maybe meet one or two people of

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1 Ibid., p. 47.

2 Loc. cit.

brains that wrote or played or did something else in a very extraordinary way of excellence." Strangely enough he predicted his own future quite accurately: "I shall teach of course," he confided, "unless I can do something on a paper or something else which it would make the god thwart me if I should mention."[1]

1 Ibid., p. 49.

CHAPTER III

GOING SOMEWHERE

In August, 1897 the Sherman family packed up bag and baggage and journied to Williamstown. This move was made chiefly because of the educational opportunities Mrs. Sherman felt would be offered in the form of Williams College. Stuart entered the junior class at Williamstown High in the fall of that year at not quite sixteen. He was described by Homer Woodbridge, one of his biographers with whom he became acquainted here, as:

> a big, handsome, dark-eyed boy,unusually attractive and versatile, a natural athlete, a good singer, a clever actor, a brilliant student. He at once took a prominent place in school activities. He played at tackle on the football team; as a member of the track team he threw the hammer and put the shot. In his senior year the track team won the championship in the Williams interscholastic meet; ... He was fond of tennis and played a fairly good game. He helped to organize a debating society, modeled more or less after the Trojan Society ... Being the best actor in the school, he was naturally drafted for leading parts in class and school plays.1

It would not have been unusual had Stuart developed a "swelled head"; but Homer Woodbridge denied this with the words: "he was not in the least bumptious or conceited. No one felt that he was making an effort to shine; he seemed remarkably free from vanity and self- assertion."[2] That trait of modesty never

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1 Ibid., p. 51.

2 Loc. cit.

disappeared from his make-up; it prevailed in all of his criticism. He was always level-headed and scrupulously fair. His unspoiled nature was even more cause for wonder since his family were apt to think anything Stuart did was always right. Whenever he opened his mouth to speak, they all willingly shut theirs. It ought, observed Woodbridge later, "to have turned him into a young prig. What saved him, probably, was the fact that in his Arizona experience he had come ... to measure himself by standards much more severe than those which were likely to be applied to him either by his family or by his schoolmates,"[1]--another characteristic which prevailed in all his later criticism, and which was revealed in many of his entries in his journal.

Stuart entered Williamstown High School at an advantageous time; the enrollment was small--only about 65 or 70 pupils were registered; and the teaching especially in the classics and in English was of high quality. This was true because many of the most able Williams graduates were on the high school faculty. It was here and now that Stuart received his first serious stimulus to enter more deeply into literature and the classics, and it was here he decided that he wished to go to college. He had not yet taken up Latin, but at his aunt's instigation he set out to do so. Along with this he took German and English, and in both the Latin and the German he came in contact with two out-

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1 Ibid., p. 52.

standing teachers who were to wield a formative influence upon his mind. Walter Foster was the Latin teacher and Grosvenor B. Hill was the German. About the latter subject under this man, Stuart exclaimed in a letter to Persis: "'German is glorious ... I glory in it more and more every day.'"[1] In another letter to her he described the progress of the boarding house for college students that his mother was running and that he was helping with, and also described his enthusiasm for German; tucked at the last half of the letter, he related his correspondence via newspaper with "the man" who "was referee in a football game ... and gave us such decayed decisions that we all waxed wrathy, ... I wrote about a half a column for the paper telling him what an outlandish fool he was. He replied through the same medium."[2] That incident was the occasion of Stuart's first appearance as a controversial journalist!

The years at Williamstown High School especially the last one in 1903, during which he took a course in English Literature given by his German professor G. B. Hill, determined largely the course of his later development. Years afterwards at a lecture before a group of Detroit teachers, Sherman spoke of the lasting influence this man had upon his life. He told them Mr. Hill had been valedictorian of his class, was a fine scholar, a rigid taskmaster, yet that it was none of these qualities alone which

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1 Ibid., pp. 52 f.

2 Ibid., p. 54.

accounted for the man's greatness; it was because "' this teacher had in himself a white-hot love for fine things in literature, and whenever one touched him one took fire. That is just the whole secret in an nutshell.'"[1]

Previously Stuart had read contemporary works, almost always of a sentimental, romantic nature as witnessed by his reading at the Arizona camp. Now for the first time he was experiencing enthusiastic presentations of the classics,--Plato, Shakespeare, Spenser--and he reached for all of these men and their writings with hunger and delight; the teacher, Mr. Hill, realizing that here was a boy with a flame to be nutured, fanned it intelligently and lovingly; not dogmatically, but in a spirit of comradeship; sometimes after a theme that Stuart had written he'd write across it, "Have you read," perhaps, "the Epithalamium of Spenser?" Or at four o'clock as Stuart was passing his desk, he'd call to him and say in a friendly manner:' "I was just going over Arnold last night. I think you'd like some of his ideas." And Stuart fired with the tone of the voice and the promise of what he was to find would race toward the library to get the suggested book. In Stuart's own words: "'Under the influence of these little fiery touches of enthusiasms between 4:00 and 4:05 in the afternoon, I read through while in high school the works of Spenser, of Keats, of Shelley, of Byron, of Tennyson, the whole works of Matthew Arnold, politics and theology included,

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1 Ibid., p. 55.

Plato, Milton's Areopagitica, and some of Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity.'"[1]

It was this same teacher who awakened Stuart's love for Greek Literature. In the school yard this teacher and another were standing eating peanuts and watching the team play football. Stuart happened to pass by, and as he did he caught the teacher's remark to his friend: "'Do you know,'" the teacher mused, shelling a peanut as he spoke, "'I read themes till three in the morning. Then I wanted something to take the taste out of my mouth. And so I took down the Antigone of Sophocles and read it; and do you know, it was so beautiful that I couldn't sleep.'"[2] Stuart "was willing to go a good way for a beauty that would not let me sleep; and so in my high school days I began to read Greek tragedies in translation, and to learn a little Greek just as fast as I could."[3]

There was now no question as to whether Stuart would go to college and as to what field he would devote his college years to mastering when he did go. Literature had won Stuart completely.

Mr Hill's picture of him at this time was enlightening. He noted: "His written work needed no signature; it was peculiar to him, since it was marked by felicitious and unexpected turns of

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1 Ibid., p. 56.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 57.

phrase and thought. In recitation work the same thing appeared in his rather deliberate speech. He could and did say witty things in his slow quiet way. He used the wit to clear up his own point of view as well as to show weakness in the position taken by others."[1]

The latter characteristic was one that he later put to effective use in his tilts with Mencken and the other Naturalistic opponents.

While in high school Stuart developed the habit of keeping a notebook into which he jotted down books that he read and sometimes comments upon them. This was his first exercise in an attempt to evaluate what he read. He filled at least six of these books, and through his quotations and comments it is known that in five weeks Stuart read "four of Shakespeare's plays, two of Chaucer's tales, the first book of 'Paradise Lost,' Pope's 'Essay on Criticism' and 'Essay on Man,'"[2] as well as a number of Bacon's essays and Tennyson's "The Princess." Epigrammatic quality or imaginative suggestiveness seemed to have determined his choice of quotations. One especially mirrored a distinction which Stuart emphasized in his later critical writings. It was from the Two Noble Kinsmen: "As we are men, thus should we do; being sensually subdued, we lose our human title."[3] Another notebook of this period showed that he was continuing with Shakespeare's plays, finishing the last two books of Paradise Lost

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Ibid., pp. 58 f.

3 Ibid., p. 59.

and the second book of the Faery Queene: the latter through its imagery, music, and probably through its moral reflections appealed to him strongly.

All of his reading had the effect of strengthening and furthering his talent for writing. His choice of words, his style, the allusions he drew from,--all were perceptively heightened. There was a real grace and balance in his writing that is seen in a short essay he wrote on the quality of laziness. One or two of the effective sentences are as follows:

> The lazy man has no regrets, for he does nothing for the organ of regret to act upon. 'Never do to-day what you can put off till to-morrow' might seem at first glance to express the right idea, but still there is prospect of work, the looking ahead which is incompatible with the lazy man's disposition. He must not be lazy customarily and work by fits and starts--this is painful too, but he must be lazy to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day and the day after and everlastingly lazy--too lazy to get up in the morning, too lazy to go to bed at night, too lazy to run up a hill, too lazy to hold himself back going down, too lazy to keep himself alive, and too lazy to die.1

In June, 1899, Stuart graduated as valedictorian from high school. Instead of doing as he had originally planned--entering college that fall, he decided that he would take a post graduate course and learn some Greek before he entered, and also, if it were possible, take some of the freshman college subjects so that he could enter Williams as a sophomore. As usual, Stuart

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1 Ibid., pp. 60 f.

was not going to spare himself any hard work. He seemed to revel in it, and it never seemed to turn him into a "grind." Just as he attacked the job of editor of Books in later years, he now attacked the study of Greek and the freshman subjects.

Meanwhile, throughout the summer if 1899, he continued to keep his notebooks and went on with his reading. He entered lines from "Paradise Regained," from "Don Juan," and a quantity from Kipling; Stuart was not unlike many another young man in 1899 in this respect; all were devouring Kipling, and so was Stuart; the difference lay in the lines and passages he chose to remember. One was, "'If I were Job ten times over, I should be so interested in what was going to happen next that I'd stay on and watch.'"[1] In Milton he seemed to be attracted by the "combination of moral idealism with lofty ambition." Yet in "Paradise Regained" he revealed his love for sheer beauty in the passage

> "... till morning fair
> Came forth with pilgrim steps in amice grey,"[2]

which he copied into his notebook.

All the while that he was taking his post graduate course, he was keeping at German and Latin; he was reading Goethe, Cicero; and in English he was forming his lasting attachment to Stevenson from whom his early "high style" may be traced.

In the notebooks one can trace many of the ideas which

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1 Ibid., p. 62.

2 Loc. cit.

afterwards played a part in his thought. If the persons who later despaired and decried what they believed to be his "desertion of opinion" could have seen what he had written in his notebooks at the age of eighteen, they might better have understood this "desertion." A passage he copied from Lyman Abbott is a key: "Though you should live to be as old as Methuselah and go on thinking, you will never come to a time when you can rest satisfied with your creed."[1] He showed the imprint of a thought which at eighteen he had copied into one of his notebooks when, in a later essay on Mencken, he used a line from Saint Beuve's essay on Joubert: "'Ou il n'y a point de delicatesse, il n'y a point de litterature.'"[2] In the notebook which covered his reading of the latter half of his post graduate course, there was to be found an interest chiefly in criticism and poetry; and the former was intelligent and thoughtful. About Herrick whom he was reading, he commented: "Herrick is incapable of such a passage as the famous 'Had we never loved so blindly'" of Burns. He compared the nature works with Chaucer--to Herrick's disadvantage: "they smack too much of gleamings from yellow pages rather than green fields. There is nothing of Chaucer's jubilant cry over the first May daisy."[3]

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1 Ibid., p. 64.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Loc. cit.

The poet who held him fascinated was Donne "to whom he devotes no less than thirty-three pages" of his notebook. "He admired Donne for exactly the qualities he did not find in Herrick --weight of substance, intensity of feeling, striking originality of thought and phrase."[1] The last notebook belonged to the summer of 1900, and found him relaxing after the hearty diet of the previous year; he read a group of "outdoor books"--Van Dyke's Fisherman's Luck, H. W. Mabie's In the Forest of Arden, Stevenson's Travels with a Donkey, and Thoreau's Summer. The latter writer affected him deeply, and he pondered much over the line "'The perception of beauty is a moral test.'"[2]

All of these notebooks revealed a trait that he was never to let go,--a "wide-ranging curiosity." His biographers commented upon it as follows: It was "a trait which characterized him to the end of his life and asserted itself with especial vehemence in his last two years, after he had escaped from the distractions of academic work."[3] Enlarging upon the reading and its full effect they added:

> They reflect, too, his passionate love of beauty and his intense delight in fine and chiseled phrase. They show the beginning of the development of a great reader, who chose his reading neither at random nor in accordance with any set program, but purposively in the directions pointed out by his

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1 Ibid., p. 65.

2 Ibid., p. 66.

3 Loc.cit.

> interest. They illustrate the tendency (which also remained with him all his life) to fall under the spell of one great writer after another--Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne, Milton, Stevenson, Kipling, Thoreau--and to try to take possession of all that each of them had to give him. They give us glimpses of his first encounter with ideas and moods which later were to play an important part in his own thinking and writing. They reflect his moral earnestness and the dawn of his literary ambition.1

That he was intellectually keen and imaginatively sensitive is apparent, yet he was no "pale young scholar"; he was strong, "a big athletic fellow who took a generous share in the activities of his contemporaries, even the rougher one."[2]

At eighteen Stuart Sherman entered Williams College, and as he had hoped--as a sophomore. Williams in 1900 was passing through a transitional period, but things were still comparatively simple. The student body numbered around four hundred, and the majority of them were earning their own tuition, either wholly or partly. The faculty was made up of "gentlemen and scholars" of the old school; the library was "octagonal" in shape, "with its rotunda and classical columns, its portraits and busts of Williams worthies, and its pleasant rooms in the wings"[3] where delightful nooks for reading were to be found. At Williams he came under the magnetic and lasting influence of

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1 Ibid., pp. 66 f.

2 Ibid., p. 67.

3 Ibid., p. 71

two men especially: Dr. J. Bascom and Professor A. H. Morton,--particularly the latter whom Stuart had in English literature during his last year; he took under him French drama and a course in poetry of the Nineteenth Century. Woodbridge gives a brief word-picture of the professor as follows:

> Professor Morton was an exacting teacher who could and did make lazy students extremely uncomfortable by his polite and puzzling irony. The elementary course in French, when he took charge of it, at once became far more difficult than it had ever been before, and large numbers of students failed ... Both the severity of his standards and his irony attracted Stuart Sherman.1

It appeared that, in addition, Professor Morton was more "the man of the world" than most of his colleagues and his interests ranged wider than did theirs. He, as Woodbridge observed, "was a lover of ideas"--(a trait which never failed to intrigue Sherman) "a student of philosophy, of religion, of art."

Stuart who had been thinking and reading and weighing life's many paradoxes and problems had been more and more reaching the conclusion that many a young person comes to, that all of his well nurtured beliefs, his traditional religion must be thrown overboard. He assumed, at this time, a completely materialistic deterministic point of view about life, and he used to argue with Professor Morton from this point of view. Morton did not accept Stuart's idea of the universe, but he let him thrust out his

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1 Ibid., p. 73.

ideas, discussed questions with him willingly and impersonally, "and seemed to enjoy the free play of intelligence with ideas."[1] Teachers perform two functions: they either bind or loosen us to or from creeds. Professor Morton performed the latter operation upon Sherman. He never tried to change his deterministic acceptance of life to one of less pessimistic character; but by standing up and presenting his own belief about life, he made Sherman aware that an intelligent, quick, alert mind such as Morton possessed, and which Sherman respected highly, did not accept the belief that to Sherman at this time seemed inescapable. Morton made him realize that other men just as intelligent, just as earnest about discovering some meaning and some way of life could and would differ from him, that there are always two or many more sides to a story, and that a great many of these sides are equally plausible to the persons holding them. He learned that one point of view can not forever be adhered to.

Another potent influence of his Williams College days was to be found in Dr. John Bascom. Bascom's influence was totally unlike that of Morton's. Bascom was the "radical" professor of the college, the professor who dared to say in no uncertain terms what he thought and why he thought it. He put through many progressive pieces of legislature in politics, in religion, and in education, and it was his determination not to compromise when he felt he was right that spurred Stuart with a similar

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1 Loc. cit.

spirit. Stuart later wrote a tribute to him, and mentioned that quality of the man which had most deeply touched him in the words:

> "He told us that, if we would live true to our own clearest vision, we must not hope for the world's success; that in the significant crises of our lives, in every moment of deepest issue, we must stand utterly alone; ... he showed us the face of truth and the austerest beauty of character."[1]

Perhaps one of the reasons that Bascom's class was stimulated to such a great extent was because Bascom never "talked down" to his classes; he always aimed at the four or five ablest men and let the others follow along as best they could. As a result they felt a challenge and usually responded to it.

Sherman was graduated from Williams with scholastic honors, as salutatorian of his class, and with a Phi Beta Kappa rank. Stuart still managed to escape the stigma of "grind" and was voted the brightest and the most versatile member of his class. It is unusual and highly complimentary that he was named the latter, for in college, although he participated in a number of activities, notably the Glee Club, the Choir, and the literary organizations, he limited his participation in athletics; he knew from his high school days how much time they ate up; he had developed a reasonable skill in any number of sports; but his interest in literature was at its height; he was eager to learn and to read all that he had neglected until this time; therefore his days were spent more or less in these fields rather than in

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1 Ibid., p. 76.

the athletic ones.

Sherman never had much sympathy with fraternities; he joined one at college only after the assurance that it was to be local, and he didn't join it until the latter part of his senior year. When later the organization made the move to join a national one, Stuart came near to withdrawing; that he refrained was only because of his affection for some of its individual members; he was never initiated into the national fraternity in which Alpha Zeta Alpha was merged. Like his subsequent attitude towards the Humanists, he didn't feel enough sympathy with the fraternities' programs as a whole to enter into them with zeal, so he refrained from participating at all. Stuart knew when he had enough. He never prolonged anything, whether then or later, beyond its usefulness.

Stuart's friends at college were representative of his wide interests; they numbered among them, "the Mears brothers, ... whose bent was largely toward athletics; Sam Allen, the oldest member of the class, and one of the most popular, in whom the scholarly interest was dominant though not exclusive; Charley Turell, combining the athletic with the scholarly; and Pat Callan, manager of the 'Lit.,' social, philosophic, and genially all-embracing in his outlook."[1] Then there were the literary fellows, who included among others, Harry Smith, Max Eastman, Morris Harmon, Charles Whittlesey, and Bruce Brotherston.

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1 Ibid., p. 79.

With these friends Sherman shared all of his literary enthusiasms, and as Woodbridge, who was also at Williams, observed: "acted as an ardent propagandist for whatever author he was enjoying at the moment." This group used to gather together "to read plays and poetry ... sometimes with a bottle of wine or a jug of cider to honor the occasion."[1] There were many outings, too, on which ideas and books were freely discussed; on one of these which lasted four days, (they used to be supplied with transportation facilities by the Woodbridges who, it seemed, had an abundant supply of horses and the vehicles to go with them; and they were in the habit of putting up for the night at a country inn) Stuart was advocating Comte's doctrine of positivism. His companion, however, didn't show the proper response, and was, in any case, rather wary of the new doctrine. Consequently Sherman, in impatient disgust, declared: "'When you see a new idea on the horizon, ... you go in the house and lock all the doors and windows and get out the old shotgun. I have to pull you out and beat you over the head with the idea before I can get you to admit that it may be worth looking at.'"[2] This trait of shutting doors and windows was one that Sherman despaired of in the Humanist doctrine, and one that he fought against throughout his life. To open his doors and windows to ideas was an inherent part of his nature which he was bent on preserving; that he was

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1 Ibid., p. 81.

2 Ibid., p. 82.

successful in so doing, whether or not one agreed upon the value of this attitude, is certain.

Sherman's love for rousing discussions which he was to carry on in subsequent years with Mencken, and the other radicals was developing at this time. He said himself in Montaigne's words: "'I love stout expressions amongst gentlemen, and to hear them speak as they think ... I love a strong and manly familiarity and conversation, a friendship that pleases itself in the sharpness and vigor of its communications ... it is not vigorous and generous enough if it be not quarrelsome, if it be civilized and artificial.'"[1] Said Woodbridge of his friend: "It is high praise of Stuart ... to say that he was an ideal man to quarrel with. He really enjoyed taking hard knocks quite as keenly as giving them."[2]

Always Sherman was reaching out for new thoughts and philosophies which he would test, adopting what seemed to him of value and discarding what by practice he had discovered to be their weakness. This was apparent in his critical writings and led to much misunderstanding--especially in the Dreiser articles which to some appeared to show a shifting of standards, but which were, in actuality, Stuart once again sorting and discarding, sifting what to him seemed to be the wheat from the chaff.

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Loc. cit.

Stimulated by his professors, his friends, and his own reading, his critical ability was maturing, but he was at the height of his "Stevensonian manner of letter writing." This was readily seen in one written at this time to his aunt (about 1903) in which he criticized Edith Wharton's writing on the basis of "too much style." Instead of saying something simply he declared that she went out of her way to say it complexly; he furnished an example in the sentence from The Touchstone: "'The tacit connivance of the inanimate had centered the lamplight.'" She might well have simply written: "'The lamplight fell on a photograph of Alexa Trent.'" He added that he realized Mrs. Wharton's way was more suggestive, that one or two such sentences were excellent; but a book filled with them was too much for him. His own letter was itself quite elaborate in style, but it was a favorable sign that he was recognizing "conceit" in others.

Through the summers at Williamstown, he and his friends spent many camping trips on Mount Greylock. The two Mears brothers have already been cited as Stuart's contemporaries at college, and they also were present on these camping trips,--as was their sister Ruth. Stuart had met Ruth Mears, who was the girl destined to become Mrs. Sherman, one Christmas vacation when she was home from Vassar. Then the Shermans moved almost next door to the Mearses; with skating parties, sleigh rides, and later the camping trips the acquaintance grew, and in 1901, Stuart's second year in college, the two became engaged; Stuart had never paid particular attention to the female members of society be-

fore, but when he met Ruth, he lost his heart completely and almost instantly. Ruth was majoring in chemistry, but "she was also keenly interested in literature and had decided opinions about it. Stuart, of course, was constantly writing and talking to her about the books which interested him; she read many of them, and lively discussions resulted."[1] An especially amusing one was over a line of Meredith's in which the poet complains of the plan on which women are made, and then exclaims, "'More brain, O Lord, more brain!'"[2] Stuart declared Meredith was petitioning the Lord that women be given more brains; while Ruth defended her sex by maintaining that Meredith himself was humbly petitioning for more so that he might understand this "wonderful creature!"

In the summer of 1903 Stuart spent part of his vacation at the Mears' summer home in New Hampshire; he mentioned in his letters the reading they were doing together, which included much of Shaw,--about whom Stuart was excited at the moment,--and Shakespeare's plays which they were reading aloud.

The most serious writing that Stuart was doing while at Williams was not in criticism but in poetry; it was poetry that he composed in his spare time, to which he was devoted, and in which he believed his talent lay. Almost all of his contributions to the college literary magazine were in the form of verse, and it was in this field that his professors seemed to feel he would

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1 Ibid., p. 90.

2 Loc. cit.

make his mark. His verse was, as was natural, largely imitative, written often in an Elizabethan or a Tennysonian style. It was his lighter verse and burlesques which truly revealed the greatest degree of skill and originality, and which expressed his lively, maturing wit; and a satiric piece on "certain learned but humorless young instructors" was especially well handled and began:

> "They have come with bags and baggage,
> Master, Doctor, nice degrees,"

It continued in this vein with the plea:

> "We are weary, very weary, of these up-
> and-coming men, ... "

and concluded:

> "Take, O take these kids away
> That have kindergartenered here,
> Let no more the breaking day
> Nursery woes and wailing fear;
> O give us to the howling heathen,
> Howling heathen,
> But not to kids to cut their teeth on,
> Cut their teeth on."[1]

Criticism--of a kind! And perhaps the first arrow shot against the "fetish of the Ph. D." which he made in his later famous essay on Graduate Schools.

In Night-Faring, a more serious poem which he wrote while at college, another characteristic was revealed. In the poem "the steersman plunging through the night with his eye on the North Star, the runner toward the dawn," are symbols of what was

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1 Ibid., p. 96.

to become the central trait of Sherman's character--"the resolute and exultant facing and conquest of difficulties in the pursuit of a great end."[1]

In the essay which Stuart wrote for his commencement oration, once again was to be observed the course of his development. His had still some trace of the mildly deterministic philosophy, but his "grasp upon life" was too great to allow him to accept fully this romantically pessimistic view. Therefore he rebelled at calling the acceptance of destiny, whatever it might be, by the name of resignation. Instead he concluded his essay with these words:

> "Is it resignation to exchange rancor for joy, rebellion for peace, impotent despair for a strong and energizing faith? All the god-powers of a man are not too great to expend upon that portion of the universe which is assigned to him. In accepting his portion a man becomes for the first time master of it. The broad highway out of the storm and stress is this: to welcome life on the terms in which it tendered, and laying hold on the best of it, whole heartedly to live for it, manfully to fight for it, and joyfully to die for it."[2]

Upon his graduation from Williams, a position was offered him at the University of Illinois as assistant instructor at $800 a year; but at the same time word came from Professor Morton that he had been able to obtain for Stuart a Thompson scholarship at Harvard. Sherman had been corresponding with

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1 Ibid., p. 98.

2 Ibid., p. 101.

the Dean of the University of Illinois, a Professor Clark, and though Sherman refused the Illinois offer, the dean, favorably impressed by his unusually original letters, made up his mind not to lose sight of this promising young scholar. That he didn't was ultimately to be proved true, for it was at this University that Sherman was destined to spend virtually the whole of his academic career.

CHAPTER IV

HERE, TAKE THIS GIFT

The Thompson Scholarship at Harvard provided for three years of uninterrupted graduate work plus five hundred a year for living expenses, and Sherman, through his excellent record, received in his second and third years additional scholarships which helped to reduce his financial worries and made it possible for him, by living fairly economically, to complete his work without debt of any kind. When he first came to Cambridge in the fall of 1903, he and his friend Woodbridge took rooms in a house on Sacramento Street; later the people who owned the house moved to Oxford Street, and the boys rooming with them liked the owners so well that they went along too.

Sherman chose, in his first year, courses with Dean Briggs in English 12, with Professor Kittredge in Shakespeare, with Professor Baker in English drama before 1642, and with Dr. Neilson in Chaucer.

Dr. Neilson's Chaucer course was full of gusto and enjoyment, and Sherman who had already developed a love for the Cantebury Tales entered into the spirit of the course with obvious delight. Under Baker, Sherman became deeply interested in the drama, and read voraciously outside the course, and even chose one of the dramatists studied, John Ford, for the subject of his doctoral dissertation. In Professor Kittredge's course, Sherman felt the striking personality of the teacher "and the

occasionally startling displays of temperament, an unending source of entertainment not unmixed with terror."[1] These displays added to the course for Sherman. He used to take notes of them, and they were the material from which he drew his later essay on Kittredge for the Nation.

This article to many was thought to be an attack on Kittredge. As Woodbridge explained, however, it was "rather a personal tribute to Professor Kittredge, combined with a vigorous assault on his theory of training graduate students in English and upon the results of that theory ... It is surely obvious, ... that a man may regard the character and personality of another with sincere admiration, yet have a firm conviction that the other's influence has been unfortunate or disastrous."[2]

It was to Dean Briggs that much of the credit for pruning young Sherman's style must go. Sherman's strong tendency to overwrite due to his reading of Stevenson and others of the Stevensonian tradition caused his writing to be filled with images and to be sprinkled lavishly with adjectives. In Dean Briggs' class, Sherman underwent stringent discipline in this regard. The students were required to write a daily theme, and Sherman labored patiently over each one. "He first worked out a general plan (usually without committing it to paper), and then composed the theme by paragraphs, not writing a word until

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1 Ibid., p.106.

2 Ibid., p. 107.

he had a whole paragraph definitely in mind. He seldom made a second draft of a theme before handing it in."[1] As will be seen in connection with his later critical articles, he employed the same general method, and actual composition was always "slow and difficult"; but when the article was on paper it was finished.

At the weekly meeting of the class all the material submitted was subjected to keen criticism by the class and Dean Briggs. Stuart was still composing verse, and often submitted that in lieu of an essay or a theme, but at Harvard his teachers seemed to sense his ability in other directions and to encourage it. Some of Dean Briggs' comments give an idea of the kind of criticism he employed, and also show the kind of writing Stuart was doing for him: "'Keep a careful hand on yourself, distinguishing the sincerely literary from the overdone, and severely cutting out the latter. You have a style that will be delightful if you prune it and will run to seed if you don't.'" On some of the other themes he wrote: "'Color too thick,' 'Vigorous and not much overdone,' 'Your mind is so fertile that you may well look out for weeds.'" A longer comment charging Sherman with "'unwillingness to say a plain thing in a plain way,'" roused his fighting spirit, with the result that he wrote two versions attaching to one the words: "'slightly revised'" and to the other "'purged of all earthly passion--all figurative language removed.'"[2]

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1 Ibid., p. 108.

2 Ibid., pp. 110 f.

The criticism of Briggs had its desired results and Sherman's future papers showed a noticeable shedding of the Stevensonian manner and a resultant lessening of criticism in that direction by Dean Briggs. In later years whenever he was to write, Sherman always went over his material from the point of view of overwriting, and for anything which gave hint of being "falsely robust," another favorite criticism of the Dean's.

Stuart now began to confine a great part of his time to essays rather than to poetry.

In his second year at Harvard (1904-'05) Stuart enrolled in six courses, but the department felt that was too heavy a schedule; so he was advised to drop two of them; he did, but continued to attend them as an auditor. The courses were half years each of Anglo-Saxon and Beowulf under Professors Schofield and Kittredge, the drama since 1642 with Professor Baker, Nineteenth Century literature with Dr. Carleton Brown, and year courses in Greek drama in translation with Professor J. W. White, and the history of criticism with Professor Irving Babbitt. All of these courses he found stimulating and well worth the labor they exacted. In his third year, however, which was mainly taken up with the writing of his thesis, he was required to take Gothic and Old French. He had always steered away from philological courses, eager always to get to the literature and the only one he really enjoyed in this field was Professor Kittredge's in Beowulf. Gothic and Old French bored him. His biographer, Woodbridge, said in this connection that it was partly the

fault of the instructors and their methods. The regular professor in Gothic was ill that year and a substitute was put in his place. Old French was given by a professor who was a distinguished scholar, but not a distinguished teacher. Courses of this kind were those which Sherman attacked in his later articles on graduate methods of teaching. He always felt that much time was wasted in them--in the English department, at least--for what was gained from them. It drove him to distraction to feel that time that he could be spending on courses which he greatly wanted and knew would be profitable was being spent in comparatively useless and boring subjects.

The greatest of all influences upon Sherman at this time overshadowed and subdued all the others. In his second year he enrolled in Professor Irving Babbitt's criticism course, and in his third year in the course on Rousseau and his influence. These he found to be the most powerfully, intellectually, stimulating of any courses he had taken. Stuart had always reveled in persons who juggled and played with ideas, and Babbitt did so with competence. Woodbridge observed that Babbitt's method is one of deduction and that his argument is in reality based on "'the intuition that is above the reason'--which is to be carefully distinguished from the intuition (or instinct) which is subrational."[1] Woodbridge felt that the way in which Babbitt determined which was "above" and which "below" was a mystery

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1 Ibid., p. 116.

only Babbitt could solve. Sherman, however, was intoxicated with Babbitt and his teaching, and at this time was not disposed to quibble about methods. New incentives were being given to life and literature, and Stuart was rapidly turning into a devout Babbitt follower. This was natural enough: Stuart always responded to new ideas,--with fervor. He had thrown himself into the study of the classics in high school, and at Williams he had swept into numerous literary enthusiasms. As on the occasion of his argument with the boy whom he accused of shutting his windows and doors to ideas, Stuart was still practicing the doctrine of taking all that came his way; putting it to the test, then keeping what he felt to be valuable and throwing out the part which seemed of no further use. Babbitt was forceful,magnetic, and he dealt in ideas. His courses were exciting, full of sparks waiting to become flames; in his own words Stuart gave the full effect of the challenge of Babbitt's teaching upon him. He wrote thus:

> He came in with a bag bursting full of books, and took out a handful of notes which he arranged around him.--Began to sway in his chair, then leaped out upon one of them and poured a barrage of criticism upon some doctrine or some line of poetry ... He deluged you with widsom of the world; his thoughts were unpacked and poured out so fast you couldn't keep up with them. You didn't know what he was talking about, but you felt that he was extremely in earnest, that it was tremendously important, that some time it would count; that he was uttering dogmatically things that cut into your beliefs, disposed derisively of what you adored, driv-

> ing you into reconstruction of your entire intellectual system. (italics not in the original). He was at you day after day like a battering ram, knocking down your illusions. He was building up a system of ideas.1

The underlined portion is intentional; it serves to show the effect Babbitt had upon Sherman. Stuart, romantic and enthusiastic in nature, loving, along with the classics, Tennyson, Stevenson, and the other Romantics; Stuart who had built up his own system of ideas largely from such sources was having these ideas as a whole torn apart; he was seeing now through Babbitt's eyes and finding flaws in the ideas, in the writings of the Romantic school which he had never noticed before. All or many of his preconceived notions about literature were being tossed about, and he himself was in the throes of constructing an entirely new system of intellectual ideas. His natural temperament was being altered; he was entering into the phase of Humanism from which he was not to allow himself to emerge for some years. The word allow is purposely used. Sherman was to undergo a program of strict self discipline in which some of his inherent ideas and beliefs about literature and life were to be checked, discarded, or at least submerged, while the Humanist principle and doctrine were strictly adhered to. This upheaval and consequent road that he would follow was neither wholly favorable nor wholly unfavorable; it was favorable in that it once and for all rid him

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1 Ibid., p. 117.

of his excess of "high style"; it was unfavorable in that it checked for awhile his sympathy with the average person; it made him more or less a Babbitt aristocrat; if at any time Sherman tended to become at all priggish, it was now. As he himself admitted in later years, the Babbitt doctrine led one to draw away from the world and its doings, to condemn but not to help get rid of that which was being condemned.

Woodbridge in telling of Babbitt's effect on his disciples observed: "Professor Babbitt belongs... to the lawgiving type of teacher--the type which gathers disciples and founds a school of thought. To many of his pupils--as to Sherman, for a time--his militant humanism became almost a substitute for religion. In the classroom he never argued; if you raised any objection to his opinions he reiterated them in more detail and pointed out your error--that is, the point at which you had wandered from his doctrines."[1] Woodbridge mentioned his resemblance to Sam Johnson especially "in the certainty of his convictions, the smashing common sense of his judgments, the burly authority of his manner, and his gift of pungent phrase."[2]

If you weren't of the same opinion you didn't especially delight in these Johnsonian traits. Sherman, as a whole, accepted unquestionably Babbitt's judgments. The only occasion in this period upon which he actively took the opposing stand was

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1 Ibid., p. 118.

2 Loc. cit.

when Babbitt accused Pater of being essentially a Romantic writer. Stuart denied the charge, insisting that he was a classic one; so aroused was Stuart by this charge that he wrote his term paper on a defense of Pater. It is interesting and significantly so, that Sherman still had enough "fire" to rush to the defense, even though he so greatly admired Babbitt. Babbitt, in connection with this term paper, unwilling to be swung over to Sherman's side applied his well known method of running through an author's works and underlining those words the author employed predominantly. He declared that Pater's use of "sweet"and "sweetness" was proof enough to him of what the man was. Sherman calmly and, no doubt, to Babbitt exasperatingly replied, "'Each time that phrase appears in Pater it is coupled with strength. You never divined that your strength is as obnoxious to me as Pater's sweetness is to you. What charms me in Pater is precisely the union of sweetness and strength.'"[1] Sherman was baring his critical knife and with courage!

In 1905 and 1906, however, "in spite of minor rebellions" it was fair enough to wager that the course of Sherman's thought was then and for serveral years to come, largely determined by Professor Babbitt's influence. Now his active participation and interest in criticism began. As Woodbridge observed: "he was vastly ... interested in the general criticism of literary tendencies and ideas in accordance with Professor Babbitt's

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1 Ibid., p. 119.

standards."[1] He was further stimulated by his meeting at Babbitt's home with the latter's friend and ally Paul Elmer More, whose essays Babbitt had referred to many times in the class room. The friendship that developed from this meeting was to be an important and lasting one.

Babbitt supplied Sherman with the basis for the critical philosophy which he was to practice for some years after his graduation from Harvard: the Humanist distinction between the law that applied to "man" and that which applied to "thing," the "inner check," the belief that "man is the measure of all things" only if "man" refers to universal man, not "individual" man; the belief in "immediate perceptions," (those principles which have been tried and found good by the human race), and the distrust in Romanticism on the one side and Naturalism on the other on the grounds that both were off the "golden mean," the doctrine of moderation.

Not only was Sherman enjoying to the fullest his class room associations, he was also entering into the life outside. A number of the fellows with whom he had gone to Williams were also studying at Harvard: Charley Turell, Pat Callan, Homer Woodbridge, and Sam Allen were there when he was and they managed to keep each other pretty well occupied in any spare time they had. They used to gather in the room at Oxford Street and hold rousing, free-for-all-discussions; they used to try out all the Harvard Square eating places, going to Gridley's "if

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1 Loc. cit.

they were in a hurry or wanted to economize," or to Jake Wirth's or Zum Burger Brau if they wanted "good steak or German beer." They bestowed "literary nicknames" upon themselves in this period, drawn largely from the characteristics they revealed in their "literary, ethical, and philosophical discussions." Stuart was Ben Johnson, for instance, because of a "dogmatic and sometimes dictatorial method of argument," (a la Babbitt), and Homer Woodbridge was Montaigne because of a resemblance in his thought to that writer. Stuart and his companions were not averse to a game of tennis in the spring, and in the fall they played a "kicking game" of football on Norton Field or on the Cambridge Common; in the winter they boxed and bowled, and it was Stuart who proved the star performer of the former sport.

In his letters home, his Babbitt temper of thought was revealed amusingly in the advice and Humanistic thought which he inserted for his sister Kitty's benefit. He evidently felt she wasn't as stable emotionally or intellectually as she might have been and from his position as elder brother he took it upon himself to act as counselor. Apparently Kitty had rebelled at too strict a reading discipline. About that Sherman commented: "still we mustn't confine ourself too strictly to the things that one likes--otherwise one won't be the lovely many-sided creature that one would like to be."[1] The very tendency that Babbitt and Sherman sought, they smothered in reality, by confining themselves

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1 Ibid., p. 125.

to one side--the Humanist--until there seemed to be no other. Toward the conclusion of the letter, he enclosed another Babbittism in : "Let me warn you against an excess of individualism ... The individualist can't have the 'last word.'"[1]

Meanwhile Stuart's last year, 1906, was occupied to a great degree by the work on his Ph. D. thesis, upon which Barrett Wendell after reading it, commented: "'that is the first doctor's thesis I ever saw that is literature.'"[2] In addition, as his last year at Harvard drew toward its end, Sherman was busily engaged in "job hunting." A position at Harvard was in the air --only a year's appointment, however, and in freshman rhetoric. Sherman himself would not have minded these drawbacks since he was sincerely attached to Harvard, but he had to think of the financial side because he was planning to marry. Fortunately, two other positions opened up at this time. One was again from Dean Clark at the University of Illinois who, true to his word, had kept his eye upon Sherman and was now offering him another position. The second of these positions was at Northwestern--which Sherman decided upon chiefly because the salary was larger, because there he would have a chance to teach literature, and because of Dean Briggs' recommendation.

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1 Ibid., p. 126.

2 Ibid., p. 133.

CHAPTER V

SPECIMEN DAYS

The summer following his graduation from Harvard was occupied in moving to Dorset from Williamstown. Earlier that year Parsons Pratt, Stuart's grandfather had died; since he had left Mrs. Sherman his house in Dorset, they decided to move there again. Stuart spent much of that summer preparing and getting into tentative shape for his courses at Northwestern. He was to teach Spenser so he reread all of him, even then commenting at the opening of the school year,"I fear that course like the devil."

He quickly adjusted himself to Illinois and Northwestern, however, and he was fortunate to become acquainted with a young English professor, Harold Goddard. Goddard had been married recently, and he and his bride befriended and looked after Sherman in his first days of strangeness and strain. He described these delightful people in a letter to Woodbridge: "Goddard is a Worcester man, and this summer just married a delightful Worcester girl (Holyoke '02)--She makes excellent fruit salad, and assures me that the only thing in life she really cares for is Poetry--not a blue-stocking in the least, but your ideal vivacious, sensitive, and cordial bride. Now Goddard himself and I find that our points of sympathy are very numerous, running all the way from a dislike of Ruskin to a dislike of 'biled shirts.' ..."[1]

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1 Ibid., p. 141.

His reading at the time (1906) was mostly in connection with the courses he was giving. J. S. Mill, Wyatt, Surrey, Raleigh, the latter whom he really discovered, he said, for the first time, and whose Cynthia he declared, contained some of the "divinest elegiac poetry mortal mind ever framed!"[1]

He was also becoming acquainted with the country about him, and he especially enjoyed his walks around Lake Michigan. In another letter to Homer Woodbridge he described one of these walks. His love of beauty, the poet side of him was determined not to be buried! "... you should walk with me as to-night," he said, "under the moon and stars, on the hard wet sand, listening to the many-voiced Michigan, and watching her subtly smiling in the dark--with unnumerable laughters,--the long seductive caress of her foaming waves amorous of the shore--the brooding skies,--the mists blue and gray ... I walked to-night with a cool low East wind in my hair, in fine ecstasy--noetic state--vital synthesis--patches, tatters, of existence uniting on 'Great Loom of Time'--into ineffable patterns, etc. etc.,--ready for poetry ... If my stoodents don't conquer me I hope to be intoxicated mildly diurnally by these godlike waters."[2] Even Babbitt couldn't quite swerve the whole course of Sherman's nature! Professor Goddard in his recollections of Sherman in 1906-'07 said that he always felt aware of the warring within Sherman between the "scholar

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1 Ibid., p. 144.

2 Ibid., p. 141.

and the poet" which became increasingly evident throughout his academic life; he felt that at Northwestern the poet was "in the ascendant." He also added that during this year Stuart devoted a renewed interest to poetry, both reading and writing it. Much of this mood can be accounted for in the fact that Babbitt's direct touch was absent, and that Stuart married that year and seemed to expand and let go as he hadn't since his first years at Harvard. He was teaching younger persons, was steeped in poetry; he was young, his life was just beginning, he was married to the girl whom he had loved almost the first moment he had seen her. What man in his place wouldn't have been more the poet and less the scholar!

The marriage which had not been definitely planned for that year had evidently been hurried because Stuart felt Ruth, who was teaching in Quincy and doing outside work in the way of lectures and research at the Massachusetts General Hospital, was tiring herself too greatly. Their life together then and later was an unusually happy and pleasant one. In one of his letters written soon after their marriage he described their sympathetic companionship as follows: "'You should have seen us last night preparing our lecture for to-day on Kingsley--I writing the lecture, Ruth at hand reading the novels for me that I hadn't read and giving me the gist, etc. Worked great.'"[1] Ruth said of one of the occasions: "'My Lord and Master sits opposite me deep in

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1 Ibid., p. 151.

a lecture on Dickens. He is supported in this trial by some of the best coffee he ever drank, which for this one and only time I made for him myself at 10 P. M. ... He has such a hard and continuous struggle to keep up with his classes that he scarcely has a moment to smoke. It's almost neck and neck between 'em, as near as I can make out. At any moment he expects them to get beyond him for good and all! It makes life so difficult to have this competition!'"[1]

In actual class room work, he seemed to be enjoying the challenge presented, and he was, as he said, using Babbitt's method,--"pound and pound on central ideas till their ears ache."[2] He was carrying, in this his first year of teaching, four courses three of which required a great amount of outside work in the way of reading.

As a whole Sherman relished and profited from this year at Northwestern, and when the time came to consider the plans for the coming year, he was disappointed to learn that if he stayed on it would have to be at the same salary and with no immediate prospects of promotion. Again, however, an opening presented itself--and again it was from Dean Clark of the University of Illinois. This time in 1907 he offered Sherman the post of Associate in English at a salary of $1500 and with promotion open. The break with Northwestern was difficult for Sherman.

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Ibid., p. 152.

He and Mrs. Sherman were loath to leave their new friends,--especially the Goddards. However, there was nothing else to do; so Sherman and Mrs. Sherman packed up and set out for Urbana where the University of Illinois was located.

At this time the Western universities were just beginning to "come into their own." They were still the subject of a spirited controversy. The East continued to think of the West as "pioneer" land inhabitated by "pioneer" people; the West struggled to prove otherwise, to show its desire for fostering an intellectual life of its own, and to interest the East in the progress of this life.

At the University of Illinois, President E. J. James was full of courage and the will to do. He had for some time been attempting to bolster up the standards of his University, to put it on a par with the leading colleges in the East. Sherman, as if fate had taken a hand, walked straight into President James' plans; for upon his arrival at the University, he was psychologically ripe for the president's use. Young, ready to attack his teaching duties with fresh enthusiasm, entering upon the start of his career, Sherman was again ready tinder for the spark of an idea. President James provided ample sparks, and the tinder promptly took fire.

Taking to Sherman on the spot, President James confided to him his plans for making the University the best of its kind, and asked him if he would be willing to lend a hand in the venture to help the West prove its worth to the East. Stuart

whose interest in the West had merely been dormant while enrollin New England's Williams and Harvard now felt it stir and reawaken within him. Under the stimulus of President James who had the Western universities' welfare sincerely at heart, Sherman opened all his doors and windows to the proposal and promised to lend his full support to the program. The persons whom he had known in his Western childhood had made a deep impression upon his memory. It was not unusual, then, that any program to help similar persons would be eagerly attempted by Sherman. His interest in democracy and popular education had begun!

The warring between Sherman's desire to teach and his desire to do work of a more creative nature, already noted by Goddard at Northwestern, Sherman voiced again at Illinois because he was becoming increasingly occupied, even though enthusiastically so, with University duties. A glimpse of the fullness of his days is given in a passage from his biography:

> He taught Shakespeare and Seventeenth Century drama. He developed for graduate students his courses on the romantic movement of the Eighteenth Century and on the intellectual leaders of the Nineteenth, through both of which he solidified the background for his writing, and he also for a time took his share of the burden in teaching the elements of composition.1

Again a letter to Homer Woodbridge spoke of it in the following vein:

> "Among the pleasures of the new year for

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1 Ibid., p. 161.

> me is a class of 60 in Freshman Rhetoric; by the Lord, when I've roared at them for an hour, I don't wonder old G. L. K. lost his temper from time to time.1

On the whole, however, he never regretted his move from Northwestern, for heavy though the work at Illinois was, he believed in it. It was here in 1908 at twenty-six years of age that he made the firm acquaintance of Carl Van Doren, "a young fellow ... instructor, handsome pup, poick, philosophe, midnight owler, book collector,"[2] whose wife, Irita, was to become Sherman's "right-hand man" in the newspaper enterprise of later years. With Van Doren he had many lively discussions on English and American literature, "railing at philologians, or arguing the relative virtues of East and West."[3] Here on November 4, 1907, Sherman's son, John Mears, was born, an event which Sherman termed "'the Adventure of all Adventures.'"

Meanwhile in April, 1908 Woodbridge and Sherman were seriously considering the publication of a joint volume of some of the best of their verse. Woodbridge had made the proposal and Sherman received it with the words "my imagination chortles over the prospect." The venture, however, proved to be somewhat of a trap. The publishers turned out to be the kind who hoped to make their money "by exploiting the vanity" of the authors, "not by selling the books to the public." Woodbridge and Sherman

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1 Ibid., p. 162.

2 Ibid., p. 166.

3 Loc.cit.

were inexperienced, but they were not lured into that trap.

In speaking of this experience to Woodbridge, Sherman's feelings were pronounced. In a lightness of tone belying his true reaction, he said, "Yours to hand--with enclosure from Blanket, Blank & Co. The devil d--n the Blanket family and the Blank family & Co .! ... So endeth the first lesson."[1]

In the same letter in which he had expressed delight at the prospect of publishing his poems, he told of an article he had just finished,--that article which proved to be "a bombshell against the entrenched commanders of the graduate study of literature."[2] He said that he had mailed it off,--before he lost courage,--to the Nation. The article was immediately accepted by the editor, Hammond Lamont.

Briefly the background and birth of this article, his first for this journal, was this: He had attended a Harvard dinner in Urbana at which he had listened to President Eliot "'pat old H------d on the back--and chant the glories of the elective system and 'scholarship'--German.'"[3] Later he had been delighted to discover an attack by John Corbin in the Atlantic on that attitude: "'The younger generation,'" Sherman exclaimed gleefully, "'is wheeling up its guns,'" and he was compelled to contribute his share to the "whole-hearted bludgeoning and horse-playing

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1 Ibid., p. 170.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 171.

with the graduate school and the Ph. D." in "one of the warmest things that was ever incubated in my penstock."[1]

The article was written in a "gaily combative spirit" for the sole purpose of exposing what seemed to Sherman the great defect of the graduate system: too great a readiness to set graduate students to "burrowing in a gopher hole" rather than "going with them into a mountain top to see the glory of the world." The original impulse of this sharp criticism had come, it will be recalled, in those courses, Gothic and Old French, at Harvard, under which he had chafed and rebelled. It was clear, he believed, that the graduate schools were not turning out, in any great quantities, men who had seen a great deal of "glory."

With this article Sherman broke into the "rank of literary journalism" and through this article he stepped in 1908 into a summer position as substitute for one of the members of the staff of the Nation and New York Evening Post who had been taken sick. It is noteworthy to hear what his biographers said of his writing at this time: "He touched on a considerable range of topics--social, political, and economic," they told us, but "even on an editorial page as well written as that of the Evening Post the contributions of Sherman have a conspicuous 'literary' quality. They are not the product of the pressure and topical demand of the newspaper office, but the leisure essays of a student built on a foundation of ideas, buttressed by substantial

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1 Loc. cit.

reading, and with fine chiseling of detail."[1] In the latter statement, the biographers added, "there is no intention of suggesting that they were the product of an easy and leisurely composition ... As a matter of fact," true to form, "Sherman almost wore himself out with his habitual unsparing application,"[2] so much so that Lamont, the editor, sent him off for a week-end, whereupon Sherman characteristically used this week-end to write an essay on Walter Pater!

He was allowed free choice of subject matter in his editorials, and consequently "practically all of Sherman's long editorials that summer had to do with education and literature," and, "in both these fields his leaning toward tradition was conspicuous as well as his sense of responsibility for the maintenance of standards."[3] In particular he discussed such questions in his articles devoted to literature, "as the relation ... the literary art" had with "the pictorial, the effects of the artist who reveals the sense of his tragic action and characters compared with the newspaper reporter's raw account of a crime, or the absence of a school of national oratory in America."[4]

He shot a few barbs at the "decadents," and expressed his impatience at this time with "the younger generation" of

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1 Ibid., p. 178.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 175.

4 Ibid., pp. 175 f.

American writers. "'Why,' he complains, 'could they not have started on the primrose way fifty or seventy-five years ago with the European pilgrims, instead of waiting till all the rouge and tinsel of iniquity pall on the heart? There is no longer anything novel or daring in being wicked in print."[1]

The influence of Babbitt at Harvard was emerging in his ideas of literature at this time, and he declared in another editorial "'the literature which makes aesthetic gratification the end of existence defeats its own end. ...' The aesthete's '... feet stray from the classic to the romantic, and thence to the grotesque."[2]

Along with the editorials he was also conducting the column of "Books and Reading" which, although, it was not the place to express too personal an opinion, he did on one occasion venture to take a poke at a certain type of literary research which sought to discover the relations of Dante's Francesca to history. He declared it was like "inquiring whether Nausicaa had a bank account, or whether Helen of Troy was really married by a justice of the peace ... A pestilence," he cried, "take the historical iconoclasts! They would rub the bloom off an apple of the Hesperides, mistaking it for mould."[3]

At the conclusion of Sherman's summer's apprenticeship, the Post and Nation expressed their satisfaction with his work, and

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1 Ibid., p. 176.

2 Ibid., pp. 176 f.

3 Ibid., p. 178.

in the spring of 1909 offered him a permanent position. Sherman was tempted; the offer was appealing; he had enjoyed and profited by his summer; and "on the personal side" the opportunity to work in contact with men like Rollo Ogden, the Post's editor, Hammond Lamont, the Nation's, and Paul E. More, a contributing editor and a man who ever since his meeting with him at Harvard, Sherman had admired, "constituted the strongest kind of temptation." The most important question, he admitted, was "which position would offer him the most favorable conditions for doing the sort of writing he wanted to do." Paul Elmer More who had become increasingly interested in him urged him to join the newspaper, and assured him it was the only place for one interested in writing fiction or general criticism. Lamont and Ogden tried to influence him on the side of the value the experience would be to his teaching of literature and composition, if after a trial he still felt he wanted to return to teaching. In a state of confusion, with the decision still not crystallized either way, he left New York,--the Post and the Nation believing, however, that in all probability he would accept. On reaching Illinois he discovered that wind of his plans had reached the administration who, fully aware of his value, was lined up with reasons why he should continue at Illinois,--along with an increase in salary, and an advance in rank to an Associate Professorship; Sherman was unable to turn the University down,--remembering, no doubt, his promise to President James that he would support him in his efforts to lift the University's

present standing, sent his regrets to New York, and continued on at Illinois.

The sacrifice was not too difficult, for he did not, in all truth, feel wholly ready for such a position as the Post offered; the editors, even with the decision in favor of the University and against them, did not close their gates to him. Realizing their loss, Mr. Ogden said: "'We bow in outward resignation, ... but we have rebellious thoughts ... Meanwhile our chosen motto remains: 'I've courted Hannah ten years, and I'll get her yet.'"[1] Thus while not officially connected with the Post or the Nation, Sherman continued to contribute, chiefly reviews and critical essays, for which he was counted upon almost as a staff contributor.

While he had been at Harvard under Babbitt, he had been devoting most of his time to the perusal of the classics,--and had not been reading much that was contemporary. He had already taken a stand against Naturalism, and was rapidly adopting Babbitt's thought that there was nothing of much importance being turned out by contemporary authors.

The influence of the newspaper and journalistic experiment and its resultant necessity of running up against the contemporary scene, together with the democratic, broadening touch of his teaching in the West,--were all working potently on Sherman's thought. Much of the aristocratic tendency which had

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1 Ibid., p. 179.

started to get a foothold was being loosened, and much of his contempt for contemporary literature was disappearing. He was by no means drawn over to its side, but he could see favorable signs in it now, and by stressing this side and fighting against its naturalistic tendency, he hoped to influence, perhaps slightly, some of its champions.

Thus all the time that he was reviewing, he was maturing, and shaping; and now he was following in earnest the rigorous discipline that he began also to recommend to his students: "getting in touch with the miscellaneous writing of his day, obtaining a sense of perspective and proportion, and practicing the art of condensation and intensity."[1] He was mastering,--in writing these reviews which were necessarily limited,--what one critic believes is the reward of writing for the so-called "slicks" or popular magazines: "a craft which requires exactness, compression, flexibility of intelligence, and versatility of style."[2] Such a writer, DeVoto maintains, "must do his job under the tyranny of space limitations, and he must be crystal clear. He must learn to do without inessentials and he must think things through."[3]

This was excellent discipline for Sherman whose greatest difficulty was in keeping his articles to a reasonable length.

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1 Ibid., p. 180.

2 Bernard DeVoto, "Writing for Money," The Saturday Review of Literature, XVI (October, 1939), 20.

3 Loc. cit.

In the strictness required by journals and newspapers in this direction, Sherman was experiencing a stringent exercise from which he was to emerge far more skillful in his ability to say what he wanted in a few well-chosen words.

A few of the writers whom he was treating at the time showed his growing interest in the modern scene. They included among others Galsworthy, W. C. Brownell, and Chesterton on whom he was "sharpening ... the edge of his critical instrument." Even with these writers and at this period when he was still a rather strict Humanist, though "his standards can be recognized ... the breadth of emotional sympathy ... and the discriminating artistic palate which finds what there is to admire and love," although "in writers whose general outlook he does not approve,"[1] are apparent. Chesterton, though he despaired of his lack of regard for logic and balance, he tasted with "enormous relish"; and he spoke of his "vigorous analogical mind" with which he could "start from anything and get to almost anything else--in time."

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1 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., p. 180.

CHAPTER VI

FOR YOU O DEMOCRACY

The emergence of a spirit in Sherman's criticism which was to pervade it throughout the rest of his life became apparent about this time (1909-'10), an attitude of sympathy and tolerance for the "other fellow," an attitude which had always been an inherent part of his nature, but which had been somewhat forgotten at his adoption of the Babbitt doctrine, an attitude of the kind which enabled Carlyle to say to Emerson, when the latter was not doing precisely that he himself was doing; "'we can spare a man for that, too.'"[1] Under Babbitt, Sherman had not shared that sentiment. Woodbridge and Zeitlin felt:

> This expression ... suggests fairly well the spirit in which Sherman did his reviewing. The catholicity of taste which at a later stage in his career surprised many of his followers was a part of his nature. (italics not in the original).2

Because of the rebirth of this catholicity of taste it does not follow that Sherman belonged "to the philanthropic order of critics who feed lions with gingerbread, shunning the brunt of battle and leaving the judgment unsatisfied."[3] Sherman was far removed from that danger; if anything he was guilty of too great a severity; no one had any sharper blade of criticism than he. He was

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1 Ibid., p. 182.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Loc. cit.

secure from the peril of fawning "by virtue of the acid in his make-up," which has already been met. The point is that at this time, instead of being directed against all non-Humanist writers, "his acerbity was directed only toward sentimentality in its extreme forms, toward the absurd, the ignorant, and the meretricious."[1] Sherman may have "turned Journalist" but he was never merely a reviewer; he was always a critic in the finest sense of that word. Neither Mencken who led the Naturalists nor Babbitt who presided over the Humanists believed greatly in constructive criticism. Both of them damned the other, but didn't do anything beyond that. Sherman chose to select as far as possible the worthwhile from both sides; to offer something constructive in the way of advice whenever he damned, and to show pleasure whenever he approved. His biographers observed that "the distinction which is commonly made between reviewing and criticism may be a valid one, but it loses a great deal of its force when the reviewing is done by a critic."[2] Run through any number of the essays in the first period of Sherman's criticism which appeared in his first book of essays, On Contemporary Literature, notably "The Aesthetic Idealism of Henry James," "The Democracy of Mark Twain," and "The Humanism of Shakespeare"; then compare them with his later ones (1920 on) from Points of View: "Toward an American Type," "For the Higher Study of American Literature,"

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1 Ibid., p. 183.

2 Loc. cit.

and "American Style"; and, in addition, the title essay in The Emotional Discovery of America and "What is Biographical Truth?" The later essays are shorter in length because of the limits in this direction imposed upon a magazine for which many of the articles were written; nevertheless they are not reviews run off without thought or time. Sherman handled this "handicap" of space without loss to style or general effect. Discipline, care, and love are evident in all that he wrote. It had never been his habit to skim through anything, however trivial, and he wasn't going to begin now.

In the summer of 1910 Sherman sailed to Europe with Carl Van Doren. Here his chief amusement was "haunting the bookshops of Charing Cross Road and buying more than he could afford." In connection with this imprudence he wrote to a friend (H. F. Goddard): "'Cornhill Road, London, W.C., let me inform you, is the primrose road to everlasting bankruptcy--unless you have previously steeled your heart to all the fragrant seductions of ancient calf and wormy folios.--I brought home some three hundred odd volumes of one sort and another."[1]

It is interesting to note that though he read and admired Babbitt's New Laokoon on the trip over and felt that he should agree with its fundamental theories, actually he didn't. "Actually "it was no simple matter for Sherman" now that he was away from his magnetism, "to train himself into a perfect

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1 Ibid., p. 192.

disciple of Professor Babbitt. For one thing he betrays something that savored strongly of 'sympathy' for the underdog, questioning whether the vigorous portion of society can afford to be complacent about the tragedies on which its own success is built."[1] In his admiration of calm and restraint so closely attached to the Humanist doctrines, there was "at times a fire and enthusiasm which somehow oversteps the virtue that it celebrates."[2] And however much he strove to restrain that fire and enthusiasm, it was too much a part of him to make a victory possible.

When Sherman returned to Illinois for the fall term, September, 1909, he entered into the work of the University with all of his characteristic energy. As the chairman of the department, Professor Greenough, was resigning, Sherman was temporarily offered the position because it was felt he was too young to assume permanent charge,--not because of his lack of ability. In this capacity he came even more in touch with the president and his enthusiasms; now his interest in democracy and his subsequent interest in American letters began to be felt in his writing. In a letter to Woodbridge in 1913 his words were proof that he was experiencing completely the "'inner throb and glow of the enterprise,'" and that it was rapidly beginning to claim a greater part of his attention. Just at this time he read an

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1 Ibid., p. 195.

2 Loc. cit.

article by Professor Morris of Yale, "The College and the Intellectual Life," in which the state university was severely attacked. His active participation and defense of popular education in the West made their appearance in a retort which appeared in the Nation and in which Sherman laid at the Eastern colleges' feet the responsibility of and the blame for much of the difficulty the Western colleges were experiencing. He asserted that the latter had "the identical passion for perfection" which the Eastern college alone claimed, and he further charged them with preserving their "idealism in glass jars"; while the West, he declared, had not lost theirs "by putting it to work in the bread of life."

Sherman was accused by Eastern associates of getting into a Western "rut"; yet at no time in his life was he "working with clearer purpose or greater industry."

In 1912 Sherman taught summer school at Columbia and renewed direct contact with the Post and Nation. While at Columbia he read Paine's Mark Twain and thereupon reawakened a dormant interest in American literature, one that was to parallel his already kindled one in universities; and both of which were to become of utmost importance to his criticism. That very summer he wrote an article on Twain, and mentioned it to Woodbridge as follows:

> You were correct in conjecturing that the Mark Twain was mine. It is really a great work--that biography; you can live in it, sleep in it, dine in it, travel in it, smoke in it, dream in it, and wholly for-

> get that you are only a damn professor after all.1

In that fall of 1912 he was also occupying himself with the ancient classics, but delighting in their poetic beauties rather than applying himself intensely to their study, suggested by Paul E. More as being of more benefit. He read the Latins in the original, and for the Greeks he depended upon the translations. "He read them with no antiquarian's interest but for the passages of poignant feeling, the philosophical bits, the wisdom of life, the sagesse." Of all of them "Sophocles, Virgil, and Marcus Aurelius were those with whom he dwelt most affectionately."[2] Much of their warm humanism was reflected in his writings in the Nation, and his attacks on "the younger generation" were based on their lack of knowledge about the past. He was still revealing his growing tolerance of this group as a whole, however, and in place of condemning them almost completely he was now expressing positive virtues which he found in their program.

His comment on them in this year showed this tolerance as opposed to the impatience of his earlier view (1908). Incidentally, he differed from Babbitt and More for this was a viewpoint which they never shared with him. Randolph Bourne's group is singled out for special mention because it was the chosen spokesman for the younger generation. He found it:

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1 Ibid., p. 214.

2 Ibid., p. 216.

> " ... a little deficient in gayety of heart, unduly confident in the strength of its insight, and amazingly disrespectful of its predecessors. ... and terribly serious ... Its fine heat and passion, its sense of dedication--that is its sacred gift, which the cynic life will gamble for; something should come of that."[1]

Before approaching that phase of Sherman's life which was directly influenced by Paul Elmer More with whom after his summer work on the Nation and Post he had become increasingly friendly--and who was editor of the Nation (about 1912-'14); before looking into that phase which is consummated by the final break with Babbitt who "grows on you by his very aloofness and cool serenity," a direct glance at Sherman's writing of this period discovers in it, a less rigid note, a note of "faith in the energetic, life-giving powers, ... a persistent sympathy with the creative forces which lead to joyous realization."[2] He has set down in this mood what might almost be called a creed to aid intackling the problem of contemporary literature, for which he was constantly showing more interest. It seems important to quote this creed in full because of its relation to the subsequent restraint, with which More, sensing that Sherman was in danger of drifting away from the Humanist moorings, attempted to combat the effect of such a creed upon Sherman. It was written in connection with an article on George Meredith and considered:

How to give pleasure without corrupting

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1 Ibid., pp. 218 f.

2 Ibid., p. 220.

> the heart, and how to give wisdom without chilling it. How to bring into play the great passions of men without unchaining the beast. How to believe in Darwin and the dignity of man. How to recognize the role of the nerves in human action. How to admit the weakness of man without dashing his heroism. How to see his acts and respect his intentions. How to renounce his superstitions and retain his faith. How to reform society without rebelling against it. How to laugh at its follies without falling into contempt. How to believe that evil is fleeing forever before good, but will never be overtaken and slain. How to look back upon a thousand defeats, and yet cling to the fighting hope.1

This kind of "enthusiasm" which recalled his earlier days at Williams was certain to be tempered and to some degree opposed, by Paul Elmer More. What would be the result of this kindly but firm hand on Sherman? Would it have the same effect that Babbitt's forceful one had produced; would it tend to tie Sherman more securely to the Humanists? Or would its effect tend to make Sherman take stock of his ideas up to this point and once more sift what he believed to be the chaff from the wheat?

The part that Paul Elmer More played in Sherman's thought--between 1910 and 1914 especially--is a significant one, and was brought about by More's position, after Hammond Lamont's death, as editor of the Nation. Sherman, a valuable contributor deepened his, up to this time, more or less formal acquaintance with

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, On Contemporary Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917), p. 264.

Babbitt's friend, and a friendship grew which although the parties concerned were to diverge greatly in point of view, was to be beneficial on both sides. Jacob Zeitlin in speaking of the beginning of this literary friendship with More and its early influence on Sherman observed:

> Sherman admired in the latter a critic of wide learning, definite philosophical vision, secure judgment, and imperturbable temper, and an editor who inspired his contributors to say the best that was in them, He expressed the feeling that in having him for an audience, one had enough, and that if one had his approval one needed no other. The desire to please was all the greater because of the freedom from editorial pressure. Mr. More exacted no conformity of opinion from his writers. Once they had gained his confidence sufficiently to be enlisted among his regular contributors, they were at liberty to utter their individual views.1

The next few lines revealed again Sherman's tendency to "give his all" to any person or cause strongly attracting him; and revealed at the same time that firmness in his nature which refused to let him submerge himself completely:

> An editor of this type exerts his influence by virtue of his intellectual force alone, and there is no doubt that Sherman's thinking on literary and social questions was for a number of years deeply colored by his sincere respect for the character and point of view of Mr. More. (italics not in the original).2

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1 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., p. 221.

2 Loc. cit.

Sherman's recent "chafing" was explained clearly enough in the next paragraph:

> ... as he could not deliberately accomodate his views and temperament to another's in all important respects (italics not in the original), there appears in his utterances of these years a tendency to wavering and inconsistency for which his editor was quick to chide him.1

More and Sherman began their exchange of letters in the beginning of 1912. Their correspondence was mostly concerned with literary questions, especially those about the articles Sherman was writing for More. There is evident to a great degree the admiration which Sherman held for More and the fondness which More felt for Sherman. The latter was still professing attachment to the Babbitt movement. He was not at this time sure enough, nor wholly confident enough of his own convictions and ideas, was not sure yet that he wished to renounce the "cool serenity" of Babbitt, and his affection for More also restrained him. Yet, he could not entirely submit to the Humanist doctrine; his own individuality asserted itself. With increasing frequency this difference of opinion was appearing in their letters. And this uncertainty about the real worth of the orthodox Humanist doctrines required of a Babbitt-More follower was consummated by the Rousseau episode. Sherman had become interested in a study of Rousseau's political thought and he attempted to defend him, in an essay intended for the Nation, against the critics of all

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1 Ibid., pp. 220 f.

countries who branded him an attacker on civilization and organized society. In Mr. Zeitlin's words:

> Sherman argued that Rousseau's aim was a social system in conformity with nature as it was conceived by his individual reason, that his gospel of the state called for "rational legislation in levelling artificial and hereditary inequalities of rank and power ... the reduction of anarchy and crime by the substitution in organized society of light and reason for routine force," and "the triumph in the individual of a spirit of obedience to self-imposed law over blind instinct." He further maintained that the reason for Rousseau's tremendous influence was that in advocating a "return to nature" he was in accord with the master spirit of his own time and of our time, and that the only effective way to criticize him was to show that he did not accomplish what he set out to perform, this being the line followed by Burke, Johnson, and Reynolds.1

Sherman, in all good faith, wrote this criticism in an attempt to fairly estimate Rousseau's political ideas, but he revealed within it that part of his earlier nature which felt "a certain sympathy with these ideas, with the democratic aspirations and the passion for social reform," and in addition he found admirable "the cooperation of Rousseau with the temper of his age."[2] These sympathies, as we have seen, had always been there, but it was only now they had been put into words. They naturally produced fireworks. Coming from a member of the Humanist party, to More, they only served to show how far Sherman had really drifted from the Humanist principles.

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1 Ibid., p. 221.

2 Ibid., p. 22.

Upon reading the essay Mr. More mailed his reactions and his reproof to Sherman with alacrity in the only rejected essay Sherman ever received from More. This one, however, was rejected and forcefully, with words to convey the horror which a Tory Humanist experiences on having a blood brother succumb, as he thought, to a sentimentalist and romanticist and--to the greatest of them all--Rousseau!

For a time a spirited correspondence followed during which More played the part of an elder, chiding, but fond adviser attempting to draw an erring young companion back into the fold; while Sherman replied in a half jesting, half serious and wholly affectionate tone with accounts of his reasons for writing the essay. He explained that:

> In the second part of my article, still intending to restrict myself to Rousseau's specific political doctrines, I argue that the return to nature which he advocates in political institutions is practically identical with a return to reason. I then contend that this "reason" was ably criticized by the Englishmen as inadequate to grasp the laws of nature. I further add that it is too little "instinctive," according to their view; and ... finally, I say that Burke believes there is a wisdom recognizable in the processes of nature which produces social and political institutions superior to anything that pure intellect can contrive.1

Gaining courage he further accused More of confusing the issue by broadening the question and in a voice, prophetic of his future one, summed up the matter with:

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1 Ibid., p. 223.

> You drop the specific inquiry concerning the opposition between the political philosophy of Burke and that of Rousseau, and substitute a general comparison of the total significance of the two men. (italics not in the original).1

To Sherman the fact that a man as soft as Rousseau in his emotions could actually evolve any kind of rationalistic political theory was fascinating and he sought to delve into the reasons for it. He was not, he firmly stated, interested in Rousseau's total significance at this writing; he was interested in whether Rousseau returned to this natural softness of temperament in his political theorizing. Sherman believed and was attempting to defend the position that he did not.

> I am not a "Rousseauist" of either side. I believe that his emotional and his rationistic tendencies both need to be criticised and opposed constantly to-day. But it does seem to me in the interest of sound criticism that professors who write on these things should distinguish between what he advocated and what he confessed.2

More who, unlike Babbitt, respected a man in spite of difference in opinion, and whose nature was naturally warmer that Babbitt's realized that Sherman's view in this matter was not to be altered, and reassured him with: "'Really, you know, I regard you as a fairly sound member of society, only a bit young, and sometimes a trifle alarming to one of my bald habit of mind.'"3

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1 Ibid., p. 224.

2 Ibid., p. 225.

3 Ibid., p. 226.

Sherman's always alert humor played upon the matter to close the incident. The reply was phrased delightfully and revealed a careful awareness of his own clash in temperament:

> "In Paradise ... I am sure that what seems to mortal eyes my heterodoxy is seen as orthodoxy on a more subtle ground. And yet at times I cannot help considering what a seductive, impressionistic, tempermental pen is lost to some non-existent 'progressive' journal believing in Socialism, Anarchism, Egoism, Cosmopolitanism, and Neo-Romanticism--lost by my early conversion to Orthodoxy, by my membership in the academic order, and by my adherence to your Episcopalian journal!--not to speak of my hostages to fortune and land-holding."[1]

Meanwhile, when it came to a discussion of aestheticism and exoticism,--eternal Humanist foes--More and Sherman as well as Babbitt, still saw eye to eye; and Sherman's darts directed against these foes in the George Moore, John Synge essays of 1912 pleased More and Babbitt mightily.

However another warning note of something akin to rebellion crept into Sherman's later correspondence about 'enthusiasm' and appreciation. Sherman felt strongly about one of the modes of presentation which the Nation chose. The Nation's articles were extremely brief, and Sherman felt the brevity allowed only the presentation of a view,--not the reasons back of it, nor any comments or appreciation about the other side of the argument. He believed this made the Nation too one-sided, and gave the impression that the contributors and editors were a rather dogmatic

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1 Loc. cit.

bigoted lot. In his own words:

> In the space at our disposal it is necessary to be very curt. And I think we ... are paying a penalty for this curtness. We get the credit for having no aesthetic appreciation (and it will be remembered that Sherman had much). ... Nearly all the best writers ... the living writers--have something fatally wrong in their moral and intellectual processes. ... We break their necks in a Nation-essay and wash our hands of them. We ought to have space to show that we, too, understand all the seductions of their hyacinthine locks before we break their necks.1

Babbitt, he said, advocated opposing enthusiasm to enthusiasm; but Sherman could not recall "a really luminous opposition" in his works, "though a long series of brilliant neckbreakings recur to memory." Sherman also deplored the general absence of enthusiasm from More's writing, and once at its surprise appearance in an essay on Norton, praised the essay highly with that virtue in mind. In answering, More replied in a disturbed tone. He had received Sherman's recent championing of the state universities and his faith in the possibilities of popular institutions with surprise and incredulity, and true Humanist that he was, had mentioned that tendency as, among others, "the dangerous romantic streak which he sought to combat in him." Now with Sherman's appeal for enthusiasm More experienced similar feelings of trepidation and chided Sherman with "after all, an excess of judgment over 'appreciation' is no bad thing these days, and 'enthusiasm' makes me afraid."2 Sherman, not yet willing to lay

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1 Ibid., p. 234.

2 Ibid., p. 236.

down his guns, retorted with sharp humor: Yes, but what is a critic supposed to do? And in the first words of actual defiance of the Humanist code of restraint, Sherman answered his own question:

> I believe that the critic's power, like the poet's, is at its highest something that cannot be defined or analyzed. It is the going forth of his hitherto closeted spirit after the thing that it loves. You say, "Is not 'letting go' the very vice which criticism needs to take its stand against?'" ... To which I rhetorically reply,"Yes, so long as he is in the rings of Inferno, and all the way up the steeps of Purgatory till he knows himself 'puro e disposto a salire all stelle'; but when he stands at last in the presence of the Celestial Rose, for God's sake let him (and Sherman warmed up for his final blast), show his soul of adoration, let him fluently and melliflously admit that he likes it, and not hold himself frigidly in expectation of caterpillars." Even the critic (he continued in white heat), it seems to me, has no right to come into the world and condemn the world, unless from time to time he can flash a vision upon the damned. The uncritical may justly complain that this would be "very gross behavior and very weak dealing." If he is bent on staining the "childhood of their joy" he must really reward them when they are men.1

The discussions and differences were dropped for the time, following More's withdrawal from the editor's chair of the Nation, but the ideas and beliefs behind them, continued to be held by both men. Sherman was, at this time, losing patience with More, and in a letter to Henry Holt with whom More and a

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1 Ibid., p. 242.

few friends were attempting to launch the "Unpopular Review" and who had been calling upon Sherman to contribute, Sherman refused with the ironic words: as Mr. More "gently intimates that my critical conscience still lacks the requisite hardness--is still vitiated by traces of popular viscosity and flabby good nature ... I fear that it is useless for me to offer any contributions."[1]

Meanwhile the University was making greater demands on Sherman's time, for in 1914, Professor Alden resigned the chairmanship of the department, and Sherman was again called upon to take charge and to be on the lookout for a man suitable to fill the position.

Sherman was well aware that to the majority of men a position in the West was not yet particularly tempting. However, he attempted to persuade John Erskine to try it. The position needed, he wrote the latter, "'a man who is a first-rate human being, a recognized scholar, successful teacher of graduate and undergraduate students, and not inexperienced in the general problems of a large department."[2] When Mr. Erskine declined the offer, Sherman observed, "'Stepping westward, alas, does not seem yet to appeal strongly to the mature mind at peace with itself and with its environment elsewhere!'"[3] Yet that he under-

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1 Ibid., p. 243.

2 Ibid., p. 247.

3 Ibid., p. 248.

stood the limitations of his University was apparent when in 1915, he himself for the first time before 1924, seriously considered making a change of residence. President Meiklejohn of Amherst approached him offering him a post at that college. It was New England, and near Boston and New York and there was some chance of doing work at Harvard. After their meeting both the president and Sherman were favorably impressed. President James, however, acted tactfully and wisely against all this concerted pressure. (John Erskine, with whom Sherman had begun a correspondence, Paul More, Mrs. Sherman all were lined up in favor of the Amherst move.) President James, however, dropped in on Sherman "for a friendly talk and sat into the small hours recounting the significant experiences of his own career, rehearsing his dreams and ambitions as they were connected with the University of Illinois." Then the following day he wrote Sherman a letter in which "after acknowledging the attractions of Amherst, he set forth the opportunities at Illinois. ... This was the very language and the very tone in which to address Sherman, and it was of more effect in determining his decision than the liberal increase in salary which accompanied it."[1]

Not only the feeling that he would be letting President James down deferred Sherman, but, as he said to President Meiklejohn, he was reluctant "to break ties," unwilling "to desert the firing line," and still felt that there was much yet to

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1 Ibid., p. 250.

be done in "the democratic experiment." This second refusal to leave Illinois brought a prompt letter from Paul Elmer More who was disappointed at what he termed this continued "talk of democracy," and it hastened, to some extent, the final break with the Humanists, which was still looming on the horizon.

CHAPTER VII

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

As far as Sherman was concerned the matter was closed and he now felt himself tied, as he had never been before, to the "service of the State University and the Mid-west," a service too distinctly "democratic" and "humanitarian," as far as the Humanists were concerned. With the decision made, Sherman settled down in 1915 to the task of as much serious writing as he could squeeze in between the University duties. In this period, among other occupations he "brought to a head" (January 24, 1915) a Book of Short Stories for use in high schools, containing a long article on the short story along with ten essays on English and American writers;--a truly remarkable book of its kind and carefully put together. He also collaborated with Carl Van Doren, John Erskine, and Professor Trent in writing the Cambridge History of American Literature. His sympathies in American literature were apparent in the men he suggested as those whom he would be willing to write on: Irving, Franklin, Hawthorne, Twain, Paine, Thoreau, were among those mentioned. In preparing the material and background for this history he revealed a growing interest in American letters: "How interesting American literature is after all--when you really get down to it! I speak from real feeling; for I have been devoting a good deal of private study to it lately. And you may be interested to hear that at the present moment I am full of one of my

bubbling enthusiasms for Irving."[1] His work on Franklin also delighted him, and he humorously noted at the time "'Day and night I quote Franklin ... Richest subject I have tackled for a long time.'"

Since 1913 Sherman and his family had been spending their summers in Dunewood, Michigan, a lake-side tract of land on which a number of the University's professors had built summer homes. Sherman spent many happy hours here, and it was in these three months that "as his college year tended to get more and more crowded with demands on his time and the number of his literary projects and commitments multiplied," he found the opportunity for "unhampered writing."[2]

Not alone because it offered unlimited freedom for writing, but because of the relaxation it provided "in the many happy hours in which he gave himself up to the natural sights and sounds of the place or indulged his aptitude for happy play with the colonists."[3] He filled his journal with descriptions full of delight in the beauty of his surroundings: one for example of the nights: "In the middle of warmer seasons there come nights when one feels it a waste of life to sleep, so soft the air, so magical with moonlight. At about eleven the whippoorwill begins her passionate, throbbing plaint. An iteration somewhat un-

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1 Ibid., p. 259.

2 Ibid., p. 277.

3 Ibid., p. 278.

wearied ... Steal out of the house in bare feet which discover intimate sympathy with the sand ... Looking west, on the left the moon, in the middle the planet (Venus), on the right the Great Dipper over the water ... Tonight pounding of heavy surf."[1]

The poet in him responded as sensitively as ever to this loveliness, and a number of sonnets resulted, one of which was:

"Now, now, now while the light
Of love's own star is high,
O seize on joy so brief, so bright,--
Like lightning in the summer night
The light of life goes by."[2]

The year 1916-'17 Sherman was granted a sabbatical leave; so he stayed on at Dunewood till late in the fall, putting his time to its characteristic use by finishing the book on Matthew Arnold he had started for the "How to Know Him" series. There had been much "writing down" in some of the books in the series, but Sherman escaped this danger, because the subject was so congenial to him that he wanted to make it so for the public. Arnold, as has been gathered, always ranked among Sherman's favorites since high school days, and with Arnold he shared the consuming concern for democracy.

Arnold wielded a noticeable influence on Sherman's democratic thought, and it is well to speak in brief detail of this influence. They had much in common and in Woodbridge's words: "Did Arnold, we wonder, any more than Sherman feel 'the conflict

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1 Ibid., p. 279.

2 Ibid., p. 287.

of aristocratic and democratic impulses, of traditional belief and dogma with scientific knowledge, of romantic inclination with classical discipline and conviction, of emotion with intelligence?'"[1] Sherman was, no doubt, thinking of his own case when he observed that "as Arnold 'advances toward the truth, keeping step with his convictions, his innermost self turns again and again, like the homesick heart of a soldier, to bid a reluctant farewell to his sympathies.'"[2] In trying to be a loyal follower of Humanism, Sherman was never to obtain the "cheerful serenity which is the reward of those who have happily resolved the struggle in their own hearts"; but he, like Arnold, experienced keenly many of the rebuffs and disappointments which followed in the continued championing of democracy and Americanism; therefore he could admire and perhaps envy, in Arnold "a wholesome tranquillity about the universe, a certain humility about his own function in it, and just that touch of superiority to transitory things--to the passing show--that enables a man of his rigorous social sense and fundamental seriousness to do his duty lightly and even gayly."[3]

In the early spring of 1917 the book was published, and received excellent notices. More wrote his whole-hearted approval in this case; and Babbitt gave his unstinted praise,--the only

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1 Ibid., pp. 297 f.

2 Ibid., p. 298.

3 Loc. cit.

book of Sherman's which he truly admired. He spoke of it as "the first good book on Arnold."

In conjunction with these two books Sherman was developing the essays opposing Naturalism which were later to appear in his first collection of essays, On Contemporary Literature. These articles were "parts of a coherent scheme. The lay figures of Wells and the representations of animal behavior in the stories of Dreiser were contrasted with the beings of flesh and blood and the standards of human value in the works of Bennett. Sherman's object ... was to define the conditions of a true realism as distinguished on the one hand from crass naturalism."[1] Dreiser, whose philosophy he was definitely opposed to, he took apart in the essay titled "The Barbaric Naturalism of Dreiser." The character in Dreiser's novels he described as "destitute," and the women in his novels he accused of standing "by nothing at all ... who recognized no standard whatever outside their own twitching nerves."[2] He followed up those essays with a decided bit of "ammunition" in one on Shakespeare, bringing out every Shakespearean utterance against "nature" he could find.

In December, 1917, while still on sabbatical, Sherman and his family lived in New York for six months; from this vicinity he was able to journey to Princeton where he spent a short time with More. Here although the two men continued their lively

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1 Ibid., p. 265.

2 Ibid., p. 268.

discussions, (among which was one on Arnold at its height), Sherman's reiteration of Arnold's belief that the best knowledge and the best ideas of a time should be carried "from one end of society to the other" showed again where his sympathies lay, and was the point of divergence between More and him. After leaving Princeton he visited Amherst to deliver a lecture on the Clyde Fitch Foundation (March 1, 1917). During his visit he was entertained by Professor and Mrs. Whicher at whose house he met Robert Frost. "With Frost he talked of Walt Whitman (whom he had declared "grows on me like the Bible and Shakespeare") and of the possibility of embracing the country in a work of art, an idea which was obnoxious to the poet's belief in natural and spontaneous expression."[1] Afterwards he described Frost as "'clear-eyed, placid brow, slightly Yankee twang, and nothing 'squashy' about him.'"[2]

Among the essays of this period was one (in the spring of 1917) on Dreiser. In it Sherman still maintained, as in the one on "Barbaric Naturalism," his distrust and dislike of Dreiser's basic philosophy; but he recognized his gifts of "surly sincerity" and "crude power," his "horridly interesting," "original," and "honest purpose." "'No one,'" he continued, "'can question his ability to use his physical eyes and ears, and to find words for the sensational life.'"[3]

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1 Ibid., p. 312.

2 Loc. cit.

3 Ibid., p. 319.

In the latter part of the New York stay, Sharman was revising some of the essays which had been appearing in the Nation, preparatory to assembling them in a book. Because the book was to hold those essays which attacked Naturalism, and because he knew they, at least, would find approval in More's eyes, Sherman wrote More asking if he would be willing to let him dedicate the book, which he thought would be called On Contemporary Literature, to him. He enclosed for More's enlightenment the tentative introduction. More upon reading it replied graciously: "'It would be a pleasure to receive the dedication of any book written in the spirit of your Introduction, ...'"[1]

In November of that year his first book of critical essays, On Contemporary Literature was published. It was received by the Humanists with glee and by the Enemy Naturalists with jaws set for the feast. Irving Babbitt praised it as a whole and said if anyone could get a hearing for the anti-Naturalist's point of view Sherman would. More, also, approved its general tone but he again brought up the matter of Sherman's insistence on adhering to democracy "as a term of blessed omen." To More, Sherman's Democracy, and Wells' and Mencken's Naturalism were of the same suspicious family, and he asked Sherman to make himself clear. Sherman answered by saying a book would hardly serve that purpose, but that his treatment would show democracy

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1 Ibid., p. 323.

as being essentially anti-naturalistic, while aristocracy would probably be essentially naturalistic.

He mentioned also in this letter, in connection with "the younger generation's" active campaign in criticism, his impatience with the majority of men in his own profession who wouldn't defend their side. They didn't have any platform; they didn't have any body of criticism; they wouldn't disturb themselves enough to formulate one. "They stand for nothing in the country--absolutely nothing. Inarticulate and apathetic parasites. Between you and me, nothing too sharp can be said of the public uselessness of the professor of English."[1] Pretty strong criticism, but spoken in the hope of rousing the Conservatives to the defense,--of bringing them into the "arena."

The War into which the country had finally been drawn found Sherman vigorously opposed to America's bearing arms, and as a result even more interested in American democracy. In the year and a half following the War he wrote most of his articles which were to appear later in Americans (1922). He made an intensive study of the tradition of democracy, and read with eagerness the Education of Henry Adams which appeared in this year; during the entire summer of 1919 his attention was occupied by "reading and writing about the Adams family, Theodore Roosevelt, Walt Whitman, and Emerson." He also devoted himself to a thorough study of the"very differing problems" put forth to a "student of

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1 Ibid., pp. 346 f.

American ideals"[1] by Mr. Mencken and Mr. Paul Elmer More. The essay on "Roosevelt and the National Psychology" was a brilliant one, summing up the many sides of the man; it received universal approval,--even from Mencken who called it "'the one intelligent monograph I have so far encountered'" with "'some positive ideas that are likely to be heard of in the Roosevelt criticism of the future, once the dusting of perfumed talcum powder and squirting of violet water ceases.'"[2]

In November, he delivered a lecture to the University on democracy, in which he voiced the results of this study and showed the leisure classes' part in this form of government and in its functioning:

> "'It is the function of the privileged class to dissipate the popular illusion that the chief good of life is pleasure, and to make manifest by their works that the chief good is rather to execute ideas, the greatest that they can conceive. It is their function to bear the costs and celebrate the pain of progress, which is effort, the pain of high choices, which is relinquishment, the pain of a long allegiance, which is fatigue, the pain of upholding the law, which is obedience, the pain of experimentation, which is solitude, and peril, and misapprehension, and voyaging through uncharted seas alone.'"[3]

This was "virtually Sherman's personal religion," and he believed always with all his heart that these qualities of self-

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1 Ibid., p. 366.

2 Ibid., p. 363.

3 Ibid., p. 370.

control and radical adventure were "inherent in the best traditions of American life." That was why he felt justified "in making his appeal in the name of 'the religion of America' or 'the religion of democracy,' whose aim it was 'to bring the whole body of humanity into a harmonious and satisfactory life and fruitful relationship."

It can be guessed now that slings were to appear from the Humanist side, for Sherman by continuing to defend the democratic ideal was arousing their suspicions; and by continuing to pound against a mechanistic philosophy he fanned the already fiery wrath of the Naturalists.

Sherman enjoyed nothing more than a roaring, pungent discussion of literary ideas. That characteristic was the one that was putting him across, so to speak, to a wider public. Even those critics whose views he vigorously opposed and denounced were willing to concede that his "stuff" was, like Mencken's, readable, startling, and forceful. That very characteristic was the weapon which disturbed the enemy's camp, and brought into that of the Humanists' many who would not otherwise have been reached. More and Babbitt were no help in this connection, for More, as Sherman once phrased it, "retreats into a blinding white mist of Platonism, where God himself would think twice before pursuing," and Babbitt is no more tractable, for he "erects his 'chevaux-de-frise' of arbitrary 'definitions' warranted to eviscerate every gizzard and break every neck born into this disastrous world since Aristotle."

The Humanists failed to see that by giving Sherman a little rope, he would not have hung himself with it, but would have lassoed a greater number of persons for their side. Instead of encouraging his widening interests, his championing of Democracy and America, they withdrew in acute horror, and regretted "his Jeffersonian idealism," his diversion from "the anti-naturalistic" campaign (a false charge), his "sickly sort of democracy." They settled in their swivel chairs, folded their hands, and resolutely turned their eyes away and refused to join or help in the tussle. Instead of realizing that Sherman's basic ideas were still well anchored, that he opposed Naturalism as such as strongly as did they themselves, that he no more than formerly believed in a mechanized universe, they chose rather to turn enemy and to chant as loudly against Sherman as did his Naturalist opponents; gathering, among others, his second essay on Dreiser as proof of his fall into the "gutter," they dropped into the same trap that More had fallen into before the Rousseau episode. It is to be recalled that Sherman had shown clearly he was not attempting judgment of Rousseau's total significance, that he was taking <u>one</u> of the man's theories, his political theory, and testing it out separately, as a matter of interest. Sherman himself said at the time that he had no patience with Rousseau as a whole; that his ideas were for the main false. As it had been apparent, however, in connection with this discussion, More, like oil, could not be mixed with water. Much the same parallel existed in this later period.

Sherman's interests, as it has been evident, had never been confined to the purely Humanist writers. His imagination and intellect had always stretched beyond. Sherman was never averse to pinning medals where he thought medals were due. It was a strong trait of his character that he continued to praise where he had many times been forced to censure. When, it will be remembered, Sherman read Dreiser for the first time, he could find nothing or practically nothing in him to praise; this was not to Sherman's mind something to crow over. He liked to show some pleasure, some approval, if only about a particularly apt choice of words or a keen touch of wit. In Mr. Dreiser's first novels he found nothing of this nature. Therefore, Sherman never having been a critic who minced matters, or hesitated in venturing his opinion, disposed of Dreiser's representation of life as follows:

> While asserting that all great art in every period intends a representation of reality, I have tried to indicate the basis for a working distinction between the realistic novel and the naturalistic novel of the present day. Both are representative of the life of man in contemporary or nearly contemporary society, and both are presumably composed of materials within the experience and observation of the author. But the realistic novel is a representation based upon a theory of human conduct. If the theory of human conduct is adequate, the representation constitutes an addition to literature and to social history. A naturalistic novel is a representation based upon a theory of animal behavior. Since a theory of animal behavior can never be an adequate base for a representation of the life in contemporary society, such a representation

is an artistic blunder.1

When this criticism appeared in Sherman's first book, Babbitt, for Babbitt, grew estatic, and even conceded that the popular tone in which it was written could be excused in behalf of the inherent fineness of the essay itself. Babbitt thought of "the movement," but he was content to stay away from the arena when anything like a popular crowd would be milling about. Babbitt liked too well his position of safety, his capacity as executor to want to try any popular fighting for his doctrine. But followers sometimes resent their leader's inactivity and once in a while they take matters into their own hands, and leave the leader to meditate upon his doctrine and the habitual waywardness of humanity while they go out and put a few principles into practice. It was not for the Humanist Movement itself that Sherman wrote this fierce, uncompromising essay; it was rather for some of the principles that the Humanist Movement stood for and in which Sherman believed and was eager to put into effect. He tried out the doctrines. If they didn't work, he tried to discover why. Often he failed; often he blundered and fell into the enemy's hands, but he was active, he was becoming an "exploring" Humanist and that was what, above all, he desired.

It was in this guise that Sherman, in 1925, wrote again on Dreiser,--this time after reading the latter's American Tragedy.

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, "Barbaric Naturalism of Dreiser," On Contemporary Literature (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1917), p. 101.

He stated in one of the first paragraphs of the essay that "this new book marks a long stride toward a genuine and adequate realism." Then followed a brief review of the direction of Mr. Dreiser's development. There was no attempt to reverse his former judgment of the man. In the tracing of his development, Sherman refered to it himself in the following words:

> Ten years ago, in an article subsequently included in On Contemporary Literature, I carefully examined Mr. Dreiser's work up to and including The Genius. It appeared to me then that he was the outstanding representative in American fiction of a point of view which I then considered, and still consider, tragic, disastrous.1

He further pointed out that previously he had criticized Dreiser's novels for their lack of an objective realism which takes human behavior as its pattern, not an animalistic theory. Mr. Dreiser until now had not "attempted to imitate the artful and deceptive 'objectivity' and 'impersonality' of the Flaubertian technique. He was a propagandist in the open, and very much bent on letting his readers know what he was driving at... His naive naturalism shaped his plot and colored his characterization. But it also protruded defiantly above the surface of his narratives."2

In the American Tragedy, however, there is greater objectivity, and Sherman, quick to find that which is worthy of

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, "Mr. Dreiser in Tragic Realism," The Main Stream (NewYork, London: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 138.

2 Loc. cit.

praise, lifted out for commendation those characteristics which to him were significant. True there are defects, which he generously pointed out, not alone in grammar and style, but in "chapters that are ... slower and more difficult than Proust" and in the passages where Dreiser "begins to 'psychologize' ... and flounders in a morass of parenthical and concessive clauses, slovenly beyond belief with repetitions, and infuriatingly clogged with 'connective tissue.'"[1]

Yet, continued Sherman, "a most impressive novel ... One has to take it seriously, if one takes it at all." Which was what Sherman proceeded to do, and which was why he concluded that Mr. Dreiser had improved in the following instances. He had: "either renounced or effectively suppressed the naive naturalism of his previous novels ... interspersed no philosophical dissertations." He had put forth "no special pleading, no coloring of the news, no studied continuous aspersion of the customs and habits of men in civil or religious societies from the untenable point of 'barbaric naturalism.'"[2] He had, instead, in Sherman's opinion, altered his method and his point of view. He now had achieved a certain artistic detachment, and "he gives me ... an impression of impersonality, objectivity, impartiality." To Sherman, Dreiser was beginning to seek in his writing "sincerely and pretty successfully to tell the truth,

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1 Ibid., p. 135.

2 Ibid., p. 140.

all the relevant truth and nothing but the truth--and with such proportion and emphasis that every interest involved shall feel itself adequately represented."[1]

Sherman concluded this second essay with the words:

> I do not know where else in American fiction one can find the situation here presented dealt with so fearlessly, so intelligently, so exhaustively, so veraciously, and therefore with such unexceptionable moral effect.[2]

Not a shift of fundamentals, but a clear, sharp, evaluation of Dreiser's later phase. Nowhere was there revealed that Sherman had deserted his always rigorous stand against Naturalism.

Up until this time, for roughly fourteen years (1906-'17), Sherman had, except for occasional rebellions, followed the Humanist fundamentals. Now, that which he had accepted from Babbitt without too much thought he was beginning to appraise in the light of its working in the contemporary world; and he began to discard from it that which he believed was of no value. In his correspondence with More the first hint of dissatisfaction, of a change in view had appeared, and the growing divergence had become clearly apparent.

Sherman, in a final attempt to swerve More, whom he always greatly admired, from what he thought to be his "cold indifference to the average man," tried to define that man, the man he was defending in his democratic ideal. "If, he explained, he had enjoyed opportunities of knowing him, 'he would have dis-

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1 Loc. cit. 2 Ibid., p. 144.

covered in the average man,--along with healthy self-interest, petty vices, and envy enough to keep him stirring,--courage, fortitude, sobriety, kindness, honesty, and sound practical intelligence.'" Then he added that if More had gone critically into the matter, he would have found something even more surprising, "He would have learned that the average man is, like himself, at heart a mystic, vaguely hungering for a peace that diplomats cannot give, obscurely seeking the permanent amid the transitory." He concluded that "if 'P. E. M.' had a bit more of that natural sympathy of which he is so distrustful, he would have perceived that what more than anything else to-day keeps the average man from lapsing into Yahooism is the religion of democracy, consisting of a little bundle of general principles which make him respect himself and his neighbor; a bundle of principles kindled in crucial times by an intense emotion, in which his self-interest, his petty vices, and his envy are consumed as with fire; and he sees the common weal as the mighty rock in the shadow of which his little life and personality are to be surrendered, if need be, as things negligible and transitory ... it vexes me to hear this emotion dismissed as fatuous democratic self-complacency."[1]

But More was not to be swerved, and now with the publication of the Americans and The Genius of America (in 1922-'23) More commented:

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1 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., pp. 374 f.

> "I begin to believe that you are a better preacher than a critic--a fault, or virtue, by the way, which has sometimes been attributed ... to myself. I can't quite stomach your view of Whitman, you have certainly said some startling things about my friend Socrates, and I am not fully persuaded about your Mark Twain ... It is a little hard for me to feel so acutely the spiritual yearnings whose voice you hear in the discontent of our disillusioned youth."1

And Babbitt remarked:

> The gap that is opening between you and More is plainly a wide one and involves indeed some of the fundamentals of the inner life ... My only regret is that we cannot present a more united front to the enemy ...2

Finally Frank Jewett Mather, another Humanist, added his protest to those of Babbitt and More. Sherman in his reply to Mather aimed at all three men and the public as well. To the criticism they made of his championship of democracy and Americanism per se, he began firmly and unequivocally his case:

> ... my capacity for enjoying adverse comment is unlimited ... More, too, has oftener than once warned me that I was going to the devil. Babbitt never writes, not even to acknowledge a present; but occasionally he sends word by some vagrant student that he fears I am slipping into the gutter.3

He made a volume criticism of Babbitt in his next sentence. It is a gem of its kind:"(The trouble with Babbitt," said Sherman,

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1 Ibid., pp. 546 f.

2 Ibid., p. 546.

3 Ibid., p. 547.

"is, that, in the path he treads, there is only room for one; the rest must be in the gutter.)" In that statement was a précis of his criticism of the Humanist Movement.

He continued this letter in a characteristic, lightly barbed humor:

> I appreciate their (Babbitt's and More's) apprehensive solicitude; and now yours. It stimulates one to be on guard. And I always rejoice at even a line, from these gentlemen, which assures me that though my limbs languish in hell, my writing is bad, and my ideas damnable, I have not wholly lost their interest nor their tearful compassion ...1

To the accusation that he was getting into a "muddle" he replied:

> I do not feel myself to be in the "muddle" in which you enjoy placing me. On the contrary I have never before been so clear about what I want to do, and about what in my--to be sure, quite insignificant--way, I stand for.2

Then taking his stand he drew up his four important reasons for rejecting the Humanist doctrine. "I have agreed with More and Babbitt," he said, "at a great many points ... As moral sages, I think them right at many vital points, but," he continued, "as leaders of the intellectual and literary movement at the present time:

1. They keep too far from the scene of

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1 Loc. cit.

2 Ibid., p. 548.

action--they too much disdain the actual conflict which is going on.

2. They interest themselves in too restricted aspects of literature--as if nothing else were of any importance.

3. They are too remorselessly negative.

4. In their ultimate position, they are both dogmatic and mystical, to an extent which makes it impossible for one to understand or follow them, to say nothing of expounding them. That is precisely why they are not exerting the influence which their own doctrines--some of which I sharply dissent from--are entitled to exert."[1]

Sherman was now, in truth, the "exploring" Humanist.

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1 Loc. cit.

CHAPTER VIII

DAREST THOU NOW O SOUL

Safely out of the orthodox camp, Sherman did not as might have been expected, sling arrows in its direction. Instead he set his shoulders, tightened his belt, and, as an "exploring" Humanist as he termed it, turned in a new direction. Unfettered by alliances with any group, he was now free to explore all critical thought and to put his own process of selection and rejection into practice. He had, through his close association and interest in the academic life, keenly appraised and criticised the latter; he had praised it where he firmly felt praise was due; but as impartially as possible, yet as stringently as possible, he had attacked its faults. One of these he had especially regretted even as far back as 1918,[1] when he explained that only a radical writer could really get any attention because the "conservatives," a large majority of whom are college professors, wouldn't dirty their hands enough to get their ideas across to the public. This was the biting criticism he hurled against his own profession:

> My quarrel with the professors is that they don't fight. They stand on their dignity--or rather they sit on it, till it is as flat as an old hat. They assent with civil leer and go out for a game of golf. They wash their hands of the whole matter, but they can't wash them clean. There are

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1 Cf. ante p. 99.

> enough of them, if they would unite a little, to make an intellectual block of some weight for the street Arabs to collide with. But they don't unite. And any Arab that pleases comes up and tweaks the beard of them with wild applause from the street.1

Perhaps this attitude was all right in the "good old days"; but it isn't now, declared Sherman, "lovers of decorum and decency cannot afford any longer to possess their souls in quietness, trusting that the world will come around to them ... They are tremendously outnumbered," he warned, but the only way they can hope to accomplish anything at all is to get out of their chairs and jump into the fracas. They may not win, but on the other hand, they will not win by doing nothing; they will be "annihilated" instead. "I for one," continued Sherman, "hope if they die they will die in their boots and not in their beds, though I am sure they would greatly prefer the downy death."2

The dissatisfaction he felt was expressed equally in his notebooks. It was not a sudden one but had been gathering momentum through the years. He was irritated by what he jotted down as the academic point of view which is "like water borne from the hills to the aqueduct. You cannot get at it. It remains for the city a closed source of refreshment in wooden containers. It is turned on and off by a small tap in the classroom. It runs through the land without watering it." Finally it lacked what was necessary for touching greatness: "courage

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1 Ibid., p. 347.

2 Loc. cit.

and love."[1]

A continuation of his earlier conflict between teaching and creative work emerged with his declaration that there was great danger not only in prematurely settling down to one set of principles forever--the "demon of the absolute"--but that the institution exerted a great pressure that was far from favorable especially for any one professing to be an artist. In his own words: "this was well enough for a man of science, but if one was an artist it led to tragic results."

While these convictions were shaping themselves within Sherman's active mind, he was,to all external appearances,carrying on his program of paving the way for democracy and the state universities along with his teaching program, and reflecting much of this in his writing. He had drawn up in 1921 three simple rules for the critic of books; the critic was to ask of the work of art:

> "'I. Is it alive?
> II. Am I glad that it is alive?
> III. Why?'"[2]

And he had been adhering to these rules rather closely. He was advocating in his teaching an understanding of the literature of any period by the study of the "emotions and ideas" of which it was composed; he was considering happily the virtue of joy. "As I pass into the yellow forties," he observed, "I begin to

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1 Ibid., p. 646.

2 Ibid., p. 401.

think that joy should be made the test of all activities worth pursuing,"[1] an utterance which he himself humorously admitted to be "radical," he supposed, for him.

Often it has been unfairly charged by Sherman's opponents that he was impatient, intolerant, and highly conventional, yet there was not anywhere a man more sympathetic with the "underdog"; in fact, this was the very characteristic which, it has been pointed out, Babbitt and More despaired of as a serious handicap. One of his colleagues who went against the unwritten conventions of the college and was handed his dismissal, was befriended by Sherman who wrote indignantly about the matter to his friend Woodbridge: "I do not believe in the doctrine of the irretrievable when I can help it."[2] The situation in the New England colleges where "it is almost impossible for a man to be even considered for a position, if he has separated from his wife--"[3] he damned as being "a remnant, residuum, of ancestral Hebraic sense of religious uncleanness to be compared with the law which declared a woman 'unclean' after childbirth ... Good God," he cried, "as Mr. D. H. Lawrence, whom I don't much admire in any other respects, says: it gives me a bellyache."[4]

Here was his own "courage and love" which in others he had

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1 Ibid., p. 436.

2 Ibid., p. 459.

3 Ibid., p. 460.

4 Ibid., p. 461.

so highly valued.

He enjoyed his contacts with the students, and they in turn spent delightful hours in the Shermans' study. George Whicher, professor at Amherst, who was one of these "favored" students described a typical evening of this kind:

> "Sunday nights in Urbana found us almost invariably at Stuart Sherman's fire. In the room where we sat books seemed to come more easily to hand than anywhere else. They lurked thickly on shelves and lay on tables to startle and waylay us. They had a way of entering into a casual bit of talk on university affairs or village gossip and diverting it to exciting issues. It might be that someone had commented with complacency on the superior intellectual response of his women students only to find himself before long listening with tingling ears to Richardson's Pamela beseeching her insufferable husband for more of his 'sweet instructions.'
>
> "All sorts of writers played their parts in our dialogues. One evening it would be Frost, then newly published in England, or Masefield, or our neighbor Vachel Lindsay shouting from Springfield, Ill.; another time William Cobbett or Wesley, Trollope of the Autobiography or Sir Thomas Browne of the Christian Morals would rise from the shades. As Sherman read aloud snatches calculated to provoke a matching of opinions, they were all, like his Shakespeare, our contemporaries. Before that fire our 'days among the dead' were transmuted into nights among the living."[1]

Allan Nevins, another one of Sherman's students, pictured Sherman himself upon these occasions:

> "'He made those ... hours beside his tall

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1 Ibid., pp. 469 f.

> bookshelves the richest that some undergraduates spent in the university. He had, though many readers of his early essays would never have suspected it, an unquenchable gusto. I recall vividly the delight he took in Albert Bigelow Paine's Mark Twain, in George Moore's Hail and Farewell, and in the last volumes of Emerson's Journals, a delight that he shared enthusiastically.'"[1]

In his opportunities for publication at this time Sherman carefully selected "those which enabled him to widen or deepen his study of American character and ideals." In this connection Mr. Ellery Sedgwick of the Atlantic provided him with numerous chances in the form of the "Dear Cornelia" sketches. Not since that with More had Sherman enjoyed so happy a relationship with an editor; it was especially stimulating because on their essential view of the "American scene," they agreed, and because both wished "to preserve an aristocratic principle of taste within the democracy." By virtue of other Atlantic articles on the state of modern American letters which he was contributing along with the "Dear Cornelia" series, wrath was landing upon his head from the Ernest Boyd Camp; those who believed that American literature cared only for "moral" standards in literature and not for artistic ones; they felt that Sherman wished to shut out all "foreign" influence and let the "Puritans" take over. From these quarters came the accusation that he was putting in a plea for "pure blonde Anglo-Saxon literature": that he was flaying the influence in American literature of literary men of European

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1 Ibid., pp. 421 f.

extraction; all this was so far from true that it is laughable, as is readily seen in a letter on that very subject written by Sherman to Sedgwick:

> The miscellaneous new nation has arrived, and its large untrained voice is certain to be the main instrument for music or noise in our literature. The only question is, who is to be the singing-master? If your masters of the "Puritan" line persistently elevate their eyebrows and draw aside to a holy aloofness, the Monster, with even grosser and grosser voice, will roar them down. If, on the other hand, the traditional leaders can develop a little cordiality and a great deal of catholicity and patience, I think they may still hold their places, many of them, and exert a greater influence than ever before. But they can't hold their places by sitting still. Their Puritanism will have to lay off its frock coat and put on its khaki.1

In a following paragraph he voiced a feeling of astonishment and impatience that there had been no attempt by the "'old guard' to recognize and adjust itself to the undeniable shift of power," no attempt to awake from "the pettiness of their self- satisfaction ... and the peril of their" own weak "contempt for the new inundating many."2

In "The National Genius" and in "What is a Puritan?," essays from his two books published at this time (1923), Americans and The Genius Of America, he argued, in the former, that any great art should reflect and give expression to "the dominant thought and feeling of the society in which it is

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1 Ibid., p. 480.

2 Loc. cit.

produced": in the latter he declared that the Puritans were not merely those men and women who in the Seventeenth Century sailed to America from England. They were, he asserted, to be found in all ages, in all places of the world. The true Puritan was recognized by "an immortal urgent spirit that breaks from the old forms, follows the new vision":[1] but instead of merely cutting us loose "from the old moorings adrift at the mercy of wind and tide," the Puritan comes aboard, like a good pilot; and while we trim our sails, he takes the wheel and lays our course for a fresh voyage."[2]

In his efforts to stimulate activity in the conservative camp, he cited Arnold's willingness to take part in literary controversies, "to make literary criticism vivacious with personality, to indulge his audience in the satisfaction of witnessing a considerable amount of pretty pointed railery-- ... never angry, or abusive, yet often very deadly to the enemy."[3]

After readingthe latest of More's Shelburne essays, "The lust of battle" still strong he went after More's scalp, and ragged him again for his "'old true-blue Tory violence'"; in addition he politely but firmly differentiated between More's mode of thought and his, declaring that More met current ideas

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, The Genius of America, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 56.

2 Ibid., p. 75.

3 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., p. 492.

with antagonism.

Important in considering his appraoching newspaper work was his growing conviction that true criticism should not be done by the college teacher or any other professional men or women, the pressure of whose full time job was certain to result in the hurried writing of the criticism. But that it should be done by men and women whose entire lives were devoted to only that. It was an ideal he often mentioned, and one he would like to have put into effect when he became editor of Books.

With his participation in the affairs of the literary world so active and the article he wrote so biting, keen, and intelligent, it was small wonder that Sherman attracted wide attention. So impressed was the president of Yale that he offered him in the latter part of March, 1923, an important place on the faculty of that time-honored institution. Sherman, however, declined, telling President Angell of his wish to continue at Illinois where his experiment in state universities was proving successful and where his real interest still lay. He felt, too, that the offer from Yale was to some extent based on his recent appointment to the Academy of Arts and Letters, in February 22, 1923, and as he could see no real advantage in accepting it other than one of prestige which had never tempted him, he gratefully, but decisively refused.

In the last half of 1923 when he wrote Forty and Upwards, one of his most thoughtful and endearing essays, Sherman's direction was clearly determined. In his journal he entered the

comment: "one takes a turn at forty," and in the essay he attempted to show that this turn could be anything but the tragedy of settling into one's niche, of being imprisoned in one's morality and character; it could be instead "a rebirth of the mind and imagination."[1]

> At forty, instead of killing off the nerves, one should be occupied in reviving the spirits. Instead of closing old doors, one should be cutting new windows.... We spend our lives in a quarry of words. We immure ourselves behind a wall of images. We talk of our characters; immediately the mallet and chisel are in our hands. We are sculptors, and our subjects are unhewn blocks of marble, and the form we seek is imposed from without.[2]

Let this talk of houses on solid rock, and characters chiseled from the marble of morality end!

> Our lives are a bright-flowing mist of days and nights. Our blood is a swift-winding river. Our flesh is a changing flower. There is a season of buds and a season of fruit and a season of wine and perfume. And after the vintage, there are memories and dreams.[3]

Let us, he sang, in a voice that might have belonged to Whitman, "make up a new set of maxims ... for men of forty and upwards who are growing tired of one another and yet are not quite ready to die.

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, Points of View (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 44.

2 Ibid., pp. 44 f.

3 Ibid., p. 45.

Let us:

> Unfold, leaf by leaf.
> Become more and more intimate with life.
> Ask no cold questions of any living thing.
> Go to all living things gently, listening for the wonder of the breath and the heartbeat.
> Ask all successful and happy creatures for a clue.
> Study all lovely things, with docility seeking their principle of beauty.
> Consider whether it is better to change and be living than to be unchanged and dead.
> Eschew pedantry and make much of fine art: it possesses a secret of eternal life.
> Be your residence urban or rural, there is no provincialism so narrow as that developed by the inveterate maintainance of your own point of view.
> Push on into untrodden forests, up unexplored valleys seeking new springs of refreshment, crying at the foot of every mountain ridge, "Let us see what is on the other side."[1]

Soon after the publication of this essay in 1923, Sherman had entered in his journal on December 22: "I wish to be a man of letters (and nothing else) and that soon: ... To flee from official and formal contacts and live in personal relations with my world ... I have nearly reached the term of apprenticeship."[2]

Meanwhile he was collecting another group of his essays in preparing for two books, one "to have as its central interest an attempt to arrive at a satisfactory critical point of view

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1 Ibid., p. 46.

2 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., p. 595.

by inspecting in turn a considerable number of points of view; and the other to contain the "Dear Cornelia" sketches. In these sketches a dialogue was carried on between "Cornelia" who represented the point of view of decorum, and other characters who, in turn, represented other qualities. "She represents certain qualities that her creator loves ... by separating himself thus from his own attachments and sentiments" he became free "to contemplate them critically and with humor. In mocking 'reverently' at Cornelia," he did not "renounce his love" but gained "a place of vantage for sympathy with other points of view."[1] These were published simultaneously in 1924 and on the whole received favorable notices.

A short time later in April, 1924, when Mr. Julian Mason of the New York Herald Tribune came to the University with the "invitation to become literary editor of that paper," the term of apprenticeship that Sherman had spoken of in his journal entry was ended. This offer presented itself at precisely the psychological moment for Sherman's acceptance, although at first he flatly refused to consider it; then apparently weighing and reconsidering the matter, he realized that it offered him the freedom from the University which he had been increasingly longing for; it gave him, at last, the chance to do creative work; it promised him the opportunity of reaching a wider audience. The University was on its feet, its standing had for

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1 Ibid., p. 602.

sometime been equal to that of the leading Eastern colleges; the work he wanted to do now needed greater bounds, a larger space.

"It had become clear to him," observed his biographers, "that his profession was no longer his calling." He wanted now "to deal with the contemporary world and with men of his own generation ... He had seen what there was in teaching, had liked it, had enjoyed young people, had magnified it. Now it was his business to see what the other sphere had to offer him. There he hoped, at least, to find people applying what the universities had been teaching, and more open-mindedly, with more of a welcome for life."[1] Sherman who for eighteen years "had been an official, thinking ... from the university point of view, writing and speaking from the academic point of view, and to the best of his ability interpreting it ... for the rest of his life ... would try ... becoming an individual and stating the truth as he saw it."[2]

The decision reached, Sherman, Mrs. Sherman, and their son John, after tieing up as many loose ends as they could, sailed for a summer vacation in Europe. Sherman was restless and not particularly keen on going because the Books position intrigued him and he longed to "get started." In addition he was naturally somewhat nervous about it, since it was the first time

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1 Ibid., p. 647.

2 Loc. cit.

he'd had full responsibility in this kind of venture. In writing to Irita Van Doren about his state of mind, he told her he hadn't been five days out before he'd begun to "twiddle my thumbs" and "wish I were in a still place where I could invent my thought."

While in Paris he spent much thought on plans for the fall undertaking. He was busy "formulating the objects of criticism in relation to the audience of a metropolitan newspaper with a large circulation." He wanted in some way to establish a literary review which would be popular and yet would have critical standards. He drew up many plans in his journal, including examination of and comments on the literary publications of the countries he visited; throughout the trip his mind saw everything in relation to his coming enterprise; he was eager, enthusiastic, and impatient to start for New York. When the boat finally pulled away from the dock, Sherman felt that at last he was beginning. "'What latent powers of appreciation does'" the public "'possess which gifted and high-minded'" critics "'can help it to realize'"[1] was the one recurring thought on which his entire attention was focused.

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1 Ibid., p. 680.

CHAPTER IX

JOY, SHIPMATE, JOY

The "traitor" as many of the conservatives tagged Sherman after his resignation at the University, took to his new tasks with exuberant eagerness. With Irita Van Doren, as his assistant, he plunged into his assignments with all the verve of an adventurer. He was virtually up to his ears in work; as he wrote in a letter to John, his son: "'I'm slogging away pretty steadily; but to tell the honest truth, I've already had quite a bit of fun out of it ... You'd better think twice before deciding not to go into journalism.'"[1] In another letter to a friend he said: "'It is a 'grind,' ... but it is as close to what I wanted as I had the right to expect, rather closer.'"[2]

An address made before the Academy of American Arts and Letters revealed the freshness and wonder which he continued to find in his contacts with the America of his own time and that of former times; there was also in this address a sly prod at the Conservative camp. "The advancement of letters," he observed, "does not wait for gentlemen or scholars or societies of gentlemen and scholars or for good Republicans or good Presbyterians or for native Americans whose ancestors landed in the

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1 Ibid., p. 688.

seventeenth century. Literature," he continued, "betrays a profound social unconcern about the sort of people she carries in her crew, provided only they are adept in hoisting sails and making a landing on terra incognita through a roaring surf. If you wish," he declared, "to advance letters ... you will have to ... risk ... getting your feet wet. You will have to renounce the antiquarian mind. You will have to accept the society of your contemporaries, for better, for worse, as your portion."[1]

"For the Higher Study of American Literature" sheds further light on his attitude toward and interest in American literature. Any one reading it now will be aware of Sherman's insight and vision if he glances at any college catalogue or talks with men on the majority of college faculties. It was, in brief, a ringing plea for a recognition of American literature, not as "part of English literature, but through its own merits." Our national literature," Sherman said, "will never hold its due place nor perform its proper work in our consciousness till we reverse the orthodox contention and declare instead that the older English literature must forever be a part of American literature."[2] (italics in the original).[2]

He commented with similar gusto in an essay on Thomas

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, The Emotional Discovery of America (Murray Hill: Farrar and Rinehart Incorporated, 1932), p. 29.

2 Stuart Pratt Sherman, Points of View (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p 82.

Beer's The Mauve Decade which he had thoroughly enjoyed, admiring "literary history" that "is here taken out of the hands of the embalmers," and wakened from the "academic anesthesia"; literary hi tory that is "quickened into an art as personal, as colorful, as seductive as poetry."[1]

It is evident from this previous material that Sherman was enamored of his new work, and relished it to the fullest degree. Lest it be thought that there was no great care attached to it, and as an answer to those who still cherish the belief that Sherman turned journalist, a glimpse of how his daily life was filled is appropriate. His biographers have a passage pertinent in this direction: "The writing of the weekly article which was his main business on the literary review was generally an affair of about five days--three days for the preparatory reading and two days for the writing itself. A working day with Sherman was not measured, it should be remembered, by a union scale. It began between eight and nine o'clock and might continue till midnight or beyond ... At first his routine was to begin his work on Monday and finish it on Friday. On that day he would have Mrs. Van Doren up in his apartment and read his article to her."[2] This Sherman did to get her reactions which would be similar to those of the public. "Before the year was out the

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1 Stuart Pratt Sherman, The Main Stream (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), p. 166.

2 Zeitlin and Woodbridge, op. cit., pp. 694 f.

writing of his essay extended itself till Sunday. In the second year, when the make-up was advanced to Monday, it meant that he was working with the printer's devil at his very elbow. It was late Sunday afternoon by the time the week's article had been ... properly revised."[1] Even Mondays were not free, for that day Sherman spent in the office and composing room, and Tuesdays, although they might not be spent with Books, were given over to lecture engagements, conferences,--in fact to any matters that could not be attended to on the other days.

With all this strenuous activity, Sherman showed no sign of lagging in his initial zealousness. As any one under like conditions, he tired and on occasions was at his wit's end, but he continued to thrive on the work. He had always preferred an overly active life above a quiet, more leisurely one. His associations at the office, too, were for the most part pleasant and stimulating, and he often referred to them with pleasure and affection. About his first impression of Isabel Paterson he noted: "'She was facing me with steel-grey eyes, sharp, penetrating, vital. I thought she looked a bit austere. She was addressing the telephone in a most pained and pointed manner. She was saying: 'Why in God's name don't you give me the number I asked for?'"

His tribute to Irita Van Doren appeared in the form of a letter sent to her on July 4, 1925 at the close of their first

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1 Ibid., p. 695.

year of collaboration. Among other expressions of gratefulness was this: "... I saw the whole of this year all in one piece, and I thought this: that never anyone who had undertaken a long task, difficult and full of unknown things, had ever before perhaps in the history of the world been so fortunate as I in finding at the outset a companion in the undertaking, ready to admit him" (she had done work of this nature before) "as an equal yet in all respects so superior."[1]

The important shift in point of view that had been going on for a number of years was clearly evident now. It had been a shift, however, that "was not the result of a facile adaptation to his new environment." He was now, in truth, by virtue of his work on the newspaper, an "exploring" Humanist, and he formulated his position as follows:

> "The wise critic attempts on all possible occasions to keep his theoretical and didactic mouth shut and all his other faculties open, here, there, and everywhere, for all the reports and rumors of positive charm and joy in things and people, as the most indubitable tokens that they are participators in some degree of that 'good life' which he is seeking."[2]

His biographers observed, that if Sherman had wished to justify or "vindicate a reputation for consistency," he could have pointed to a fact which was merely hinted at, that "inasmuch as he still looked in literature for evidence of the good

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1 Ibid., p. 700.

2 Ibid., p. 708.

life ... his attitude was as moralistic as it had ever been."[1]

In addition Sherman could have replied that he was breathing new life into a part of his nature that had been snuffed out at his entrance, years before, into the Babbitt camp at Harvard; that he was attempting to balance both sides of his nature. Finally he might well have added that any one who examined closely all of his articles and any one who had been associated with him in his years after his graduation from Harvard could not deny that he had many times expressed, and with no hesitation, his objections to the Humanist system of thought, that he had always been less rigid in both his moral and aesthetic sympathies than either of the two leaders of that camp. "'I want as long as possible,'" Sherman once wrote in a letter, "'to remain two persons: it is truer to life! If I were seven, it would be still truer.'"[2]

When in July, Sherman began his vacation at his summer home in Dunewood, Michigan, the usual attractions of the place failed to charm him. He wrote to Garetta Busey, who was helping out at the office while Irita Van Doren was on her vacation, in the following vein:

> Do not think ... that I am rejoicing in the woods and emancipation. Far from it. Not a day has gone by that I haven't sighed for N. Y. and the office. Nature has lost her charms for me--at present. I enjoyed the

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1 Ibid., p. 709.

2 Ibid., p. 747.

"slavery" more than this liberty.1

Sherman returned to Books in September, 1925 as the prodigal returned to his father, and he "seems to have relished the second year in New York even more intensely than the first." Certainly as far as leisure was concerned, he had even less than before. In a letter to his son John, he had mentioned being "'up till 4:30 this A. M. and awake till 5:30 finishing my Montaigne which had to go in this P. M., then at it again at 8.'" As in his first year, he seemed to show no signs of decreasing interest; and soon after his arrival in New York he was left unexcited by the offer of the presidency of the Pennsylvania State College; it only provided him with the opportunity of expressing how well satisfied and content he was with his present work.

He continued to read, to write, and in the latter part of 1925 published Letters to a Lady, a follow-up of the "Cornelia" series; while early in 1926 he published, Critical Woodcuts, his first collection of Books essays.

In order to be with John who had been recently sent to a tuberculosis sanitorium in Colorado, Sherman accepted in July, 1926 a summer teaching position at Colorado College. He might have been expected to betray some sign of regret for a life he had once been so intimate a part of; proof of his strong and ever growing attachment to his new work, however, was everywhere apparent in his letters which revealed: "his boredom with

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1 Loc. cit.

teaching in spite of the enthusiasm of his students, his pleasure in the society of John and of some of the interesting people he met."[1] In one of his notes to Irita Van Doren, he voiced again the sentiment that he had shown the previous summer: "I am disgusted to find ... I feel no special sympathy for those of you who are still in New York--busy about getting out another number of Books."[2]

At the conclusion of the summer session in August, Sherman and Mrs. Sherman headed for Dunewood for a few weeks of rest; at the end of the first week he was "chafing to get back to New York," but he ruefully remarked, that his "gaoler" wouldn't consent to his return for awhile at least. He was busily engaged in writing a Godwin article which he finished on August 19; and he was eagerly looking forward to the subjects of his next two essays on Stephen Crane and Joseph Hergesheimer. Two days afterwards, on August 21, while he was swimming with Mrs. Sherman, his life, so rich in its past accomplishments, so electric in its present phase, so fecund with promise for the future was ended by a heart attack. The man whose influence had swiftly and surely penetrated the heart of American criticism, the man who, while he had been a part of it, life had so well become, the "exploring" Humanist, the opponent of Naturalism, the true critic, had joined his three well-loved immortals: Arnold and Emerson and Whitman.

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1 Ibid., p. 783.

2 Ibid., p. 784.

DIGEST

The son of sturdy New England stock,-though himself born in 1881, under a Western star,- Stuart Pratt Sherman inherited shrewd wit, kindly humor, a love of books, and a skill with words; in early life he developed a sympathy and a respect for the average man because of a year's experience in an Arizona mining camp. In high school at Williamstown his interest in literature was seriously kindled; at Williams College (1900-1904) it was faithfully nurtured; at Harvard (104-1906) it included a thorough study of the classics under Irving Babbitt, professor of criticism and magnetic force of the Humanist movement. Largely through Professor Babbitt's teachings, Sherman's traditional beliefs and ideas about literature were subject to a complete reorganization. The result was Sherman the youthful Humanist, follower of Babbitt and of the latter's friend and ally, Paul Elmer More.

The teaching in the West, (107-1924) the contact with the journalistic world, the interest in democracy and Americanism, all tended to test rigorously his Humanist principles; and brought about, from approximately 1920 on, a re-appraisal of these principles which consummated (1923) in a new set to be practiced by an "exploring" Humanist whose purpose now was to understand, not to judge.

In the main the new doctrine condemned not so much the Humanist principles in themselves, but their failure to be

explained and applied to the modern world by their exponents, Babbitt and More, whom he branded as "aristocratic" and too far removed from the scene of actual conflict.

The adoption of the new doctrine culminated in an eventual resignation (1924) from the academic life and the acceptance of work in personal contact with contemporary problems--as literary editor of the New York Herald Tribune Books; a position which he held with enthusiasm and referred to affectionately as "work as close to what I wanted as I had the right to expect, rather closer." Until sudden death by heart attack, he continued to approach this work with eagerness. The tragedy occurred on August 21, 1926 when Sherman was but forty-four years old and beginning what promised to be an even more brilliant stage in his career.

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